European History/Age Of Revolutions

European History

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Introduction

The early nineteenth century was dominated by the aftermath of the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars. Although Napoleon was defeated in 1815 and the Bourbon monarchy restored to France, many European states were transformed by the 25 years of conflict. States such as Prussia, Austria and the Netherlands found themselves expanded by the peace settlement of 1815. Conversely, other countries, most notably Poland, were dissolved in this process of state consolidation. These national upheavals were accompanied by a heightened sense of nationalism amongst the population of many states, which had been encouraged by Enlightenment ideas, spread throughout Europe by the Napoleonic conquests.

In the decades following the peace of 1815 many European countries were beset by social conflicts as the populations sought to assert their rights against the often autocratic rulers of their states. This was to produce what the historian Eric Hobsbawn has dubbed *the Age of Revolutions*, as the tensions within states were to frequently erupt into large-scale political upheavals, such as the French revolutions of 1830 and 1848.

Europe in the Age of Revolutions

Europe was a turbulent continent in the period after the Napoleonic Wars. Although the Treaty of Vienna had tried to restore many European states to their pre-war states, the influence of the war years was significant, particularly the Enlightenment ideas that were spread throughout Europe by Napoleon's armies. The result was an age of revolutions. A distinctive feature was the manner in which waves of revolutions could sweep through Europe, most notably in 1830 and 1848, when popular revolt in France influenced the people of other states to rebel against their rulers.

Belgium

Prior to the nineteenth century the southern part of the Netherlands had been dominated by foreign powers, most notably the Hapsburg states of Spain and Austria. However, the critical geographical position of the area led the major powers of Europe, in the Treaty of Vienna, to cede the territory to the Dutch Republic in 1815, to create the United Kingdom of the Netherlands. This caused resentment within the region; local liberals resented the autocratic nature of the Dutch king, whilst conservative Catholics disliked the dominance of Dutch Protestantism.

These tensions were to lead to the revolution of 1830, when the region declared itself independent, taking the name Belgium in reference to the Celtic tribes who had lived in the area in ancient times. The response of the Dutch government came in August 1831, when the Dutch Army set off on a so called "Ten Days Campaign". It was very successful, as the Dutch army pushed into the heart of Belgium within just a few days, also capturing the key city of Antwerp. However, after a desperate Belgian appeal for French help, French troops crossed the border into Belgium. With Russia too busy to guard the Dutch back, both sides agreed to a ceasefire. On December 20, 1830, the European powers recognized Belgium's de facto independence from the Kingdom of the Netherlands. It was not until April 19, 1839 however, that the Treaty of London signed by the European powers (including the Netherlands) recognized Belgium as an independent and neutral country.

France

The Treaty of Vienna saw the Bourbon monarchy restored to France. Although the first king after this restoration, Louis XVIII, managed the country well, his successor, Charles X, proved to be unpopular. An autocratic ruler, Charles passed a number of acts that stripped away power promised by Louis to the people. This concluded in the July Ordinances, which dissolved Parliament. As a result, the people of France broke into revolution, known as the July Revolution, replacing Charles X with Louis-Philippe Orleans in what is known as the July Monarchy.

The 1848 Revolution and Louis Napoleon

In February 1848, the citizens revolted again, this time forming a provisional government led by two men, Lamartine, a political republican who advocated freemarket, and Blanc, a social republican, who advocated socialism. Blanc created a system known as the national workships that provided employment to the masses in France.

The National Assembly of 1848 established universal male suffrage, and the people that year elected virtually no socialists. The new government threw out the national workshops, resulting in a revolt by the people. The people, looking to the former glory of France, installed Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, relative of Napoleon Bonaparte, the throne.

President Louis Napoleon Bonaparte rebuilt central Paris, installing new apartments, straight, long, and wide streets, sewage, and sanitation. He also widened the streets in Paris, in an attempt to subvert future revolution, since in the past, revolutionaries in France had used the streets to barricade themselves.

Louis Bonaparte

Emperor Napoleon III is often referred to as the socialist emperor because he gave many socialized programs to the citizens. He gave hospitals, socialized medicine, the right to unionize and strike, shorter hours, injured worker homes, a revamped prison system, and more.

However, Napoleon III was also militarily inept. He chose to get involved in wars which he didn't have to, trying to live up to the glory of Napoleon I. He was defeated in his involvement in the Italian unification movement where he sent troops to Rome to protect the Pope, in his involvement with the Mexican Empire from 1862-1867, and in the Franco-Prussian War from 1870-1871, during which he was actually captured by the Prussians.

Great Britain

Whilst reform in many European states was only achieved with the aid of bloody revolution, British parliamentary democracy meant that Great Britain managed to reform and modernise relatively peacefully. The most notable instance of this is the Reform Act of 1832, which reallocated seats in the House of Commons to address the new industrial cities of Britain, and increased suffrage from 500,000 men to 800,000 men. This was to be followed thirty years later by the Reform Act of 1867 granted suffrage to 1/3 of British men. By 1884, 2 to 4.5 million men had suffrage in Britain, including urban workers.

Britain saw other reforms, such as the 1833 Factory Act, which outlawed the employment of children under the age of 9 and limited the workdays of all children. The Mines Act of 1842 was a similar piece of reformist legislation,

formally prohibiting women and children from working underground.

British Corn Laws

British Prime Minister Robert Peel

One of the most entertaining pieces of political reform during this era was not related to working life, but to the economic management of Britain. The Corn Laws were taxes placed on imported goods to protect Britain's own goods. They forced the British people to buy the more expensive and lower quality British grain by putting a tariff on French grain, which tended to be less expensive and higher quality. The goal was to keep British money in Britain, rather than being spent on importing French grain.

The Corn Laws were passed by the members of the Tory party in Parliament. The Tories were populated by the Landed Gentry. The Whigs, which represented the working class, merchants, factory owners, and so forth in Britain, were opposed to the Corn Laws, but because the Tories controlled Parliament, they were unable to stop the passage of the Corn Laws. The expensive price of British grain necessitated a rise in wages, and factory owners such as David Ricardo were forced to pay higher wages so that their workers could afford the food. Ricardo thus concluded that the Corn Laws simply redistributed wealth from the industrialists to the landowners.

In 1819, 80,000 people gathered in Manchester demanding the repeal of the Corn Laws. British soldiers opened fire, killing 11 demonstrators, in what became known as the Peterloo Massacre. As a result, the Anti-Corn Law League was established in Manchester, and used pamphlets, mass demonstrations, and torchlight parades to protest the Corn Laws.

In 1846, the Corn Laws were repealed under Prime Minister Robert Peel. The government was still led by Tories, but the Irish Potato Famine led to the repeal, demonstrating the new power of the industrialists in England.

Spain

Spain was a country in turmoil during the age of revolutions. Occupied by Napoleon from 1808 to 1814, a brutal "war of independence" was waged against the occupiers that led to an emergent Spanish nationalism. An era of reaction against the liberal ideas associated with revolutionary France followed the war, personified by the rule of Ferdinand VII and—to a lesser extent—his daughter Isabella II. Ferdinand's rule included the loss of the Spanish colonies in the New World, except for Cuba and Puerto Rico, in the 1810s and 1820s. A series of civil wars then broke out in Spain, pitting Spanish liberals and then republicans against conservatives, culminating in the Carlist Wars between the moderate Queen Isabella and her uncle, the reactionary Infante Carlos. Disaffection with Isabella's government from many quarters led to repeated military intervention in political affairs and to several revolutionary attempts against the government. Two of these revolutions were successful,the moderate Vicalvarada or "Vicálvaro Revolution" of 1854 and the more radical la Gloriosa (Glorious Revolution) in 1868. The latter marks the end of Isabella's monarchy. The brief rule of the liberal king Amadeo I of Spain ended in the establishment of the First Spanish Republic, only to be replaced in 1874 by the popular, moderate rule of Alfonso XII of Spain, which finally brought Spain into an period of stability and reform.

1848 Revolutions in the Rest of Europe

In Italy unemployment, demands for land, and higher wages led to revolts. King Charles Albert led a military campaign against Austria, while Garibaldi attempted to organize a republic in Rome. The movement largely failed, however, because different groups of nationalists could not agree on goals. The Austria defeated the campaign, and Napoleon Bonaparte sent troops to Rome.

In Germany revolts started in order to achieve more liberal rights, but the goals were soon replaced with nationalistic sentiments. The Constituent Assembly, under the direction of 800 delegates from the German states, offered Frederick William IV, King of Prussia, the crown of a unified Germany. However, this movement failed as well, as the Constituent Assembly had no actual power and Frederick would not accept a crown "from the gutter". Prussian troops put down revolts in Berlin as well as other revolts throughout Germany.

In Austria, demands for political reform and nationalism created demands for autonomy. Metternich fled to England, and Emperor Ferdinand fled in favor of Franz Joseph. Revolts occurred in Vienna, Prague, and Hungary. A Slavic congress was set up in Prague, Hungarians demanded autonomous rule. Eventually, with the aid of Russia, Austria was able to suppress the revolutions.

The Era of Realpolitik

Before 1848, idealism and reason were at the forefront of people's minds. However, after 1848, the concept of Realpolitik and action arose. This new toughness of mind rejected high-minded ideology for action, and marked the end of the Enlightenment.

On the right, Otto von Bismarck of Germany took Realpolitik actions, manipulating the Ems Telegram in order to spur war with France (Franco-Prussian War) and thus assist the process of German unity. Emperor Napoleon III also did so, widening the streets of Paris during his reconstruction of Paris in order to prevent barricading in the case of revolution. Finally, Cavour of Italy is an excellent example of a practitioner of Realpolitik, as he got Napoleon III to attack Austria over Lombardy-Venetia.

On the left, Marx was a practitioner of Realpolitik, advocating violent revolution among the proletariat in order to install a new communist system.

Industrial Revolution

The shift that precipitated many of the conflicts of the early nineteenth century was the industrial revolution. The growing industrial base of many European countries was to encourage urbanization, often at the expense of the living conditions of the workers. This was coupled with new agrarian technologies which required fewer people to work the land, whilst producing greater agricultural yields. In some countries this precipitated an industrial revolution, where urban industry played an increasingly dominant role in the economy. This process was first seen in Britain, Prussia and the Netherlands in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century whilst other countries, such as France, Italy and the United States of America were to industrialize in the late nineteenth century. Some states, such as Russia and Austria, failed to industrialize significantly in this period, a factor that would lead to later difficulties during the First World War.

The Prefiguration of Industry

The first evidence of industrial production can be found in the large cities of early modern Europe. Even the modest size of European capitals at the beginning of the modern period allowed for a specialization of trade and, as the cities grew, production increasingly took place in specialist workshops. Tradesmen, who had previously taken only one or two apprentices, began to take larger teams of workers, a process that transformed itself into the paid employment of labor in industrial enterprise. A similar shift took place in rural areas, with what was known as "putting out" or "cottage industry", where agricultural workers would take raw materials from contractors and use them to produce

finished goods.

Despite these developments little could be done without a proper transportation system, which would allow goods to be moved and marketed. At the beginning of the eighteenth century the cost of transporting goods overland was prohibitively expensive for all but the shortest journeys.

Beginnings of Industry

The age of industry for Europe began with slow progress in the 1780s. Western Europe tended to advance more quickly than the east. Britain initially led the way. Progress remained slow until the 1850's, because most people continued to use old methods, and population increases reduced the benefits of industrialization. As a result, the industrial age did not start in continental Europe until after 1815, and was not complete in Britain until 1850.

In 1750, Britain was only slightly ahead of France in its industrial production. By 1830, its industrialization was at twice the level of France, and by 1860, three times. Other countries were further behind; much of Europe's progress was retarded by political and social turmoil, as well as constant warfare. Industrialization also was limited by lack of transportation, reluctance to cease traditional business practices, and lack of technology.

Stephenson's rocket, a train engine, allowed wagons to be pulled along railroad tracks, allowing for the quick transportation of materials, goods, people, and communication. Population increased rapidly across Europe. Finally, the steam-powered engine was invented and improved, allowing for mechanization in industry.

By 1815, continental Europe had started to see progress. Its industrialization was facilitated by a large skilled labor force, strong governments, and no need to develop new ideas as Britain had already set a precedent for other nations to follow. European governments became much more involved in industrialization, building an infrastructure of railroads and canals. The German government created the Zollverein, a customs-free trade union, which allowed goods to move freely within the German states without being hampered by tariffs. Governments also played a role in banking, and they allowed banks to become corporations, such as Crédit Mobilier of Paris.

By 1851, Britain was the "workshop of the world." Britain had 2/3 of the world's known coal supply, and 1/2 of its iron. Centers of continental industrialization included Belgium, France, and Germany.

Social Impact of the Industrial Revolution

The Industrial Revolution resulted in poor urban living conditions with no sanitation. Urban and industrial growth went beyond the state's control. Public drunkenness as a reaction to the dismal lifestyle became prominent, and the cities were filthy and living conditions tight. Life expectancy was very short, and disease was rampant. New social classes, particularly the industrial middle class and urban workers, emerged as well. The standard of living decreased for many, with low wages and high prices, as well as horrible working conditions and the employment of children.

Noticing the poor crowded city conditions and impoverished workers in industrial Europe, several economists expressed their pessimistic predictions on the future of the industrial society. However, both were eventually proven wrong.
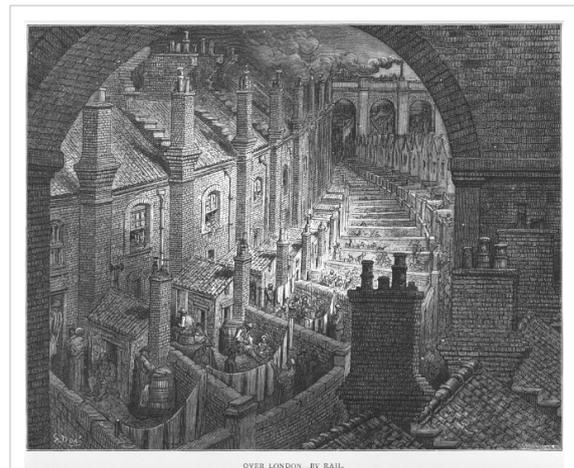
Over London by Rail Gustave Doré c 1870. Shows the densely populated and polluted environments created in the new industrial cities

Thomas Malthus (1766–1834)

Thomas Malthus was an English economist with a grim prediction for the future. *An Essay on the Principle of Population* stated that the population was outgrowing the food supply, and that this would inevitably cause a "great hunger," or massive food shortage. Malthus suggested, as a solution to this problem, marrying later in life to slow the population growth, but he was not optimistic that this plan would ever come to fruition.

David Ricardo (1772-1823)

David Ricardo, in his *Iron Law of Wages*, predicted that the income of wage-earning workers would remain below or just near subsistence levels, despite any attempts to raise wages.

British Working Class Responses to Industrialisation

Luddism

The Luddites were a group of workers opposed to the effects of the mechanisation of industry, particularly in textiles. The advent of large scale spinning and weaving machines meant that textiles could be produced at lower costs than previously, undercutting the prices of the traditional cottage industry of handloom weavers.

The attacks of the Luddites began in 1811 and were targeted at the machinery of factory and workshop owners. The campaigns of the Luddites were often closely targeted at specific forms of machinery and, despite the modern connotations of the name, the group were not opposed to progress in principle.

The name of the group is derived from its fictional leader, Ned Ludd. This figure was used as a focal point for demonstrations, and to distract attention from the real leaders of various protests.

The Luddites were followed some years later by the Swing rioters who, following a mythical leader, Captain Swing, opposed the mechanization of agriculture. The Swing riots mostly occurred during the early 1830s and were put down with often severe force.

Trade Unionism

The Luddites were, in essence, part of a reactive movement, fighting against the modernization of methods of production. An alternative, and often more effective, method of action, was the organisation of workers into trade unions, where rights could be secured through collective bargaining and the threat of strikes. Whilst such movements were often not illegal in themselves, many of their actions were. It was, for instance, considered a criminal offence for a workman to break his contract and striking workers could be charged for offences relating to conspiracy or breaches of public order.

Despite this there was a sustained demand on the part of the workers that their rights be recognized and the persistent campaigns of workers eventually achieved the legal recognition of unions.

Chartism

Chartism was the first large-scale working class political movement.

The London Working Men's Association wrote reform goals in a charter, with six points:

1. Universal male suffrage
2. Annual election of House of Commons
3. Secret ballots
4. Equal electoral districts (to prevent "rotten boroughs")
5. Abolition of property requirements for the House of Commons
6. Salaries of members of the House of Commons

Although the Chartist movement did not see immediate success in its aims, all of the main points of the charter, with the exception of annual elections, were adopted by the early twentieth century.

Society and Culture

Capitalism

Industry of Britain, western Europe, and the United States developed within the system of capitalism. "Capital" is a medium of exchange for property or services that are valued. Capitalist systems require the laissez-faire principle of minimal government intervention.

Republicanism

Republicanism advocated liberty, fraternity, and equality, and was in favor of Constitutions, Parliaments, and democracies. It opposed the monarchy, aristocracy, and the church. Republicans tended to be students, writers, members of the intelligentsia, and also workers. Republicans were supporters of the French Revolution and its ideals.

Liberalism

Liberalism, or classic liberalism, at the time advocated free trade, laissez faire, constitutions, parliaments, and no violence. It didn't advocate democracy, but rather constitutional monarchy. Liberals tended to be middle class merchants and professionals.

Conservatism

Conservatism rose as a reaction to the liberal ideas that began with the violence, terror, and social disorder of the French Revolution. It was supported by the traditional ruling class, as well as by the peasants. Conservatives believed in order of the society and state, based on faith and tradition. Metternich was the champion of Conservatism and tried to preserve its ideals and the Old Regime through the Congress System. Conservatives were opposed to the Enlightenment and its effects, and were anti-revolution, anti-democracy, and anti-nationalism. They preferred tradition, gradual reform, and the maintenance of the Old Regime.

Socialism

Socialism is the theory or system of social organization in which the means of productions and distribution of goods are owned collectively or by a central government authority. The idea was fostered to combat the industrial society that allowed millions to toil endlessly while a few owners reaped all the benefits of their labor. Socialists argued that liberalism was fragmenting society, and that socialism would reunite it. After 1815, socialism became the new radical doctrine, especially in France. Socialists fought to protect the interests of the workers rather than capitalists, and argued that wealth is unfairly distributed and that thus workers deserve a larger share. Socialism was a diverse political philosophy and encompassed the views of many different thinkers, such as Saint-Simon, Fourier and Owen.

Henri de Saint-Simon

Henry de Saint-Simon believed that the elite of society lacked the skills necessary to be valued so highly. He believed that rewards should be in proportion to one's social contribution, and that society should be run by qualified technocrats, or a technically skilled elite.

Charles Fourier

Charles Fourier was a French merchant, whose experiences of the French Revolution led him to believe that free market capitalism in general, and speculation in particular, was damaging to the welfare of all. His solution was to suggest a planned economy, based around idea communities known as *phalanstries*, where 1,620 people would live in a single building surrounded by 5,000 acres of land. By centralising production, efficient agriculture and industry could be achieved. Although his plans were never put into practice, his utopian socialism was an important influence on later thinkers.

Robert Owen

Robert Owen was a Scottish manufacturer. In his mills at New Lanark in Scotland he proved that investing in the welfare of employees could be profitable. He provided his workers with schools and free accommodation. By doing this Owen was rewarded with a hard-working and loyal workforce, and his mills were some of the most profitable and productive in Britain.

Owen was later to invest his profits in the community of New Harmony in the United States of America. The community was heavily reliant upon the leadership of Owen and quickly foundered. Although Owen's communities did not long outlast his lifetime, his thinking was highly influential amongst later socialists, and the term *communist* was originally coined to describe Owen's followers.

Karl Marx

Probably the most important socialist thinker of the nineteenth century was the German writer Karl Marx. Marx's rise to prominence began in the Year of Revolutions, 1848, with the publication of *The Communist Manifesto*, a volume which he wrote with the help of Frederick Engels. The book was an attempt to create political tension between economic classes around the world. He also wrote *Das Kapital*, a critique of capitalism that argues as to why Marx believed capitalism should fail. He sought to incite the violent revolution of the proletariat against the bourgeois. The proletariat described the working class, while the bourgeois described the middle and upper classes that owned the means of production. This revolution would be caused by what Marx described as a historic class struggle between these two groups. After this revolution, Marx argued for the formation of a classless society, in which no private property, religion, or government existed.

Marx also advocated the concept of dialectical materialism. The theory states that history is driven by economic conditions and material private property inequality. This theory was based on Hegel's dialectic theory, in which a thesis and antithesis are resolved into a synthesis. The end of Marx's concept of dialectical history is the synthesis of communism because private property is prohibited. Marx believed that the rise of the proletariat was inevitable, even if he had never existed and written his book. This is what separates Marxism from Utopian Socialism - Utopian Socialism required the benevolent and peaceful surrender of the means of production by capitalists.

Utilitarianism

Proposed by Bentham, it suggested that the best form of government does the most good for the greatest number of people.

Nationalism

Nationalism was spawned by Napoleon's empire, and emphasized pride in one's language, tradition, culture, and religion. Nationalism caused conflict over boundaries in Europe. Nationalists frequently looked to folktales, poems, songs, grammar, and dictionaries for sources of traditional culture in a nation. Nationalism especially came to rise in Germany, Italy, Ireland, Poland, and Hungary.

Romantic Art

The romantic art movement took place in the 1800s, especially emphasizing emotion, imagination, drama, disorder, and dark colors. Romantic art typically portrays the mystical communion of art and nature, typically using picturesque or exotic subjects. Romantic art reinforced individualism.

Goya

Francisco José de Goya y Lucientes was an influential Spanish painter of the Romantic period. Perhaps his most famous work was *The Third of May 1808: The Execution of the Defenders of Madrid*, which portrays the Napoleonic Wars in Spain, with a faceless French firing squad murdering members of the Spanish resistance.

Delacroix

Ferdinand Victor Eugène Delacroix was the leader of the French Romanticism in painting. Delacroix's techniques would prove to be an important influence on others. His use of expressive color profoundly shaped the work of the Impressionist and Symbolist movements.

Francisco Goya. *The Third of May 1808: The Execution of the Defenders of Madrid*. 1814. Oil on canvas. 345 x 266 cm. Madrid: Museo del Prado.

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