

Revolutions and Reform

The Restoration political settlement, designed to stop revolution, inadvertently fed the grievances of nationalism and Liberalism in the period 1815-1848. This Age of Revolutions gained fuel from industrial problems and the legacy of unfulfilled promises from the French Revolution. Among the great powers, Great Britain avoided revolutionary outbursts through the enactment of tentative Liberal reforms in this period. Revolutionary turmoil culminated with the revolutions of 1848, one of the more overlooked events in European history.

The Revolutions of 1830-1831

We have already seen how the great powers used the Concert of Europe from 1815 to 1830 to subdue revolutionary movements in Sicily and Spain. However, these successes hid the underlying force of Liberal and national movements. In 1830, the fever of revolution flared again, as usual beginning with France.

The restored Bourbon kings of France reestablished the power of the Catholic clergy and favored the interests of former aristocrats. When elections repudiated the monarchy's policies, it curtailed voting rights and censored the press. Militant republicans and middle-class moderates joined in overthrowing the king, who quickly abdicated. As a compromise, the throne went to a ostensibly reformist relative of the deposed monarch. The new King Louis Philippe (r. 1830-1848), known as the "bourgeois king," promised to abide by the Constitution of 1814.

Events in France inspired revolts in Belgium and Poland in 1830-1831. The Belgians never fully accepted their absorption into a Dutch kingdom and, following the French example, declared their independence. Because the great powers agreed to maintain Belgian neutrality, the new nation was permitted to establish a new Belgian kingdom. However, this was not the case with Poland, which also revolted against Russian authority in 1831. With no outside support, the Polish revolt was brutally crushed by Nicholas I, Congress Poland was eliminated, and the territory directly incorporated into Russia.

When the Christian Greeks revolted against their Islamic Turkish rulers in 1821, the event inspired an outpouring of support by European intellectuals, who praised the ancient Greeks as the founders of western

AP ACHIEVER

civilization. By the 1820s, the great powers had come over to the cause of Greek nationalism, even Metternich. The Turks were defeated and by treaty (1829), a new independent Greek state was created, a rare example of a successful nationalist revolt in this era.

Reform in Great Britain

Great Britain avoided revolutionary upheaval because of its ability to adapt to the challenge of Liberalism. To incorporate the new industrial bourgeoisie and provide an orderly process of representation for new cities, Parliament passed the Reform Act of 1832, which doubled the number of males who could vote, but retained a property requirement. Further reforms followed with the abolition of slavery in the British Empire in 1833 and the Poor Law of 1834. In reflecting the Liberal notion of self-help, the latter law actually punished the poor by making relief in government workhouses more unpleasant than any job. One of the more important principles favored by Liberals was free trade, thus their opposition to the protective Corn Laws. In the context of the Irish potato famine, Parliament in 1846 finally repealed the Corn Laws, initiating a century of British support for free trade. Conservative Tories supported their own notion of reform-through protective legislation. Following the Factory Act of 1833, Tories in Parliament helped pass the Mines Act, banning children and women from mines, and the Ten Hours Act, limiting hours in textile mills. In giving the middle class a stake in society, British reformers hoped to gain their support for compromise over revolution.

The Revolutions of 1848

• SKILL SET

You may note in this section how the unresolved issues of the French Revolution echoed throughout the 19th and into the 20th centuries. Consider the continuities and changes (CCOT) in the issues that prompted revolutions and the rhetoric and strategies employed by revolutionaries to achieve their aims.

Revolutions broke out all over Europe in the fateful year 1848. Though few of these revolutions achieved their stated objectives, their consequences proved significant nonetheless.

Three major causes account for the stunning outburst of revolutionary activity: (1) Liberals felt profound frustration at the lack of political change toward constitutional and representative government, (2) nationalists chafed under the 1815 Vienna settlement and its blunt rejection of self-

determination for ethnic minorities, and (3) the lives of the working class suffered from poor agricultural productivity (the era was known as the “hungry ‘40s”) and jobs lost to new industrial machinery. The combination of these factors made for an explosive compound, and once again the match was lit in France. For an overview of events, review the following chart:

France			
Trigger	Leaders	Events	Results
<p>Discontented over the slow pace of reform and corruption in Louis Philippe’s government, Liberals agitate for suffrage expansion. When the government resists, Paris rises in revolt.</p>	<p>*Louis-Philippe (r.1830-1848) – king who abdicates under pressure of violence in Paris. *Louis Blanc – socialist advocate of national workshops for workers. *Louis Napoleon – nephew of Napoleon I and opponent of monarchy; elected president of the Second Republic in 1848.</p>	<p>*Following Louis’s abdication, a provisional government is formed, composed of moderate and radical republicans. *To appease the working class of Paris, Blanc’s national workshops are formed, but end up as a system of poor relief, not of worker control of industry. *In June, radicals attack the democratically elected Constituent Assembly in hopes of creating a socialist republic. *The June Days see class violence between radical republicans and the army, which results in the deaths of 10,000 radicals and the establishment of a moderate republic. Louis Napoleon is elected president in December by a wide majority and moves to consolidate power</p>	<p>France establishes the Second Republic, but only after class warfare reveals the divisions in French society between the middle and working classes. Louis Napoleon exploits fears of further social conflict to establish authoritarian control of the nation.</p>

AP ACHIEVER

Prussia			
Trigger	Leaders	Events	Results
Inspired by the French example, Prussian Liberals in March revolt in Berlin against the Prussian monarch, who had resisted sharing power.	*Frederick William IV (r.1840-1861) – agrees to the election of a Prussian assembly, but refuses the Frankfurt Liberals’ offer of a crown of a united Germany; does grant a conservative constitution to his kingdom in 1850.	*Liberals force the election of a Prussian Assembly, which grants autonomy to the Polish minority. *By spring’s end, the Prussian army has reestablished control of the nation and reversed the pro-Polish legislation of the Assembly.	Prussian Liberals failed to meet their objectives of political equality and reducing the influence of traditional institutions. However, despite its three-tiered class voting system, the 1850 Constitution provides for representation.

Frankfurt			
Trigger	Leaders	Events	Results
After the riots In Berlin, Liberals overthrow the traditional political structures of other German states. After elections, delegates meet in Frankfurt to attempt Germany’s unification.		*Deliberations divide over whether the Austrian empire, with its large non-German population, should be included in a unified Germany. This debate causes a fatal delay while conservatives regather their strength. *By December, the Liberals issue a Declaration of Rights for the German people. *In April 1849, the Frankfurt Assembly completes its constitution and offers the crown to Prussian King Frederick William IV.	By the time German Liberals complete a constitution, their moment has passed. Frederick William IV rejects the “crown from the gutter,” and the work of German unification would await the wily diplomacy of a conservative (see next chapter).

Austria			
Trigger	Leaders	Events	Results
Workers and students rebel in March in Vienna, causing Metternich to flee to Britain.	*Klemens von Metternich – conservative Foreign Minister and creator of the Congress System, unable to withstand the revolutions of 1848. *Franz Joseph I (r.1848-1916) – becomes emperor in December upon his father’s abdication.	*Serfdom is abolished throughout the Austrian empire. *Emperor Franz Joseph agrees to a Constitution in 1849.	After the initial nationalist revolts, the new emperor and army reestablish control and crush further opposition. Franz Joseph rejects the Liberal constitution and works toward centralization of power, though the ethnicities issue would fester.

Prague			
Trigger	Leaders	Events	Results
Seeing the turmoil in the Austrian Empire, Slavic nationalists meet in Prague to discuss the unification of all Slavs.	General Windischgratz – German army commander who succeeds in dispersing the Prague Assembly.	After initially promising autonomy to Bohemia, whose capital was Prague, the Austrian emperor reverses course and breaks up the Pan-Slav Congress.	Though unsuccessful, Slavic nationalism remains a problem for the Austrian Empire and forms an essential cause of the First World War.

Budapest			
Trigger	Leaders	Events	Results
Events in Paris inspire the Hungarian Diet in March to proclaim liberty for Magyars- (another name for Hungarians).	Louis Kossuth (1802-1894) – Hungarian Liberal and nationalist who leads the cause of the Magyars.	*In the fall of 1848, Hungarian nationalists proclaim a new constitution that promotes the Magyar language but suppresses the rights of Slavic minorities in Hungary. *After the constitution is rejected by the Austrian emperor, Hungary declares complete	The Austrians exploit Slavic fear of Hungarian power to crush the revolt, with Russian support. However, Magyars remain the most restive of the ethnic minorities in the empire.

AP ACHIEVER

		independence. *Emperor Franz Joseph in 1849 asks Russian leader, Nicholas I, to crush the nationalist movement in Budapest.	
--	--	---	--

Italy			
Trigger	Leaders	Events	Results
After the March Days in Vienna, several Italian states rise in revolt against Austrian rule.	*Charles Albert (r. 1831-1849) – king of Piedmont-Sardinia who urges the Italian states to resist Austrian rule. *Pope Pius IX (r.1846-1878) – begins as a reformer, but when expelled from Rome by revolutionary forces, turns against modernism. *Giuseppe Garibaldi (1807-1882) – Italian nationalist military leader who helps establish the Roman Republic.	*Charles Albert of Piedmont-Sardinia grants a constitution to his people and declares war on Austria to gain territory in Italy. *Numerous other Italian states rise in revolt against Austrian rule. When the Pope is expelled from Rome, Mazzini proclaims a Roman Republic. *Austrian authorities agree to abolish serfdom in Italian Habsburg lands, hoping to win over peasants. *The Austrian army defeats Charles Albert and restores authority in the other Italian states. *To win over Catholics, Louis Napoleon in 1849 sends French troops into Rome to restore Pope Pius IX.	Italians experience few specific victories in 1848, other than the abolition of serfdom in some states and a constitution for Piedmont. However, the revolutions set the stage for Italian unification under Piedmont-Sardinia later and its opposition by the papacy.

What began with heady enthusiasm and high hopes ended with bitter disappointment and violent suppression. In general, the Liberal and nationalist revolutions of 1848 failed to achieve their objectives, and for this three key factors are responsible: (1) Though revolutionaries boasted lofty rhetoric and inspiring visions, they lacked the institutional power of conservative forces, such as armies and bureaucracies, (2) conservatives successfully exploited middle-class fears of radical revolution after the June Days in Paris, and (3) rulers pitted ethnic minorities against one another to

divide and conquer and reestablish authority. Despite these failures, the revolutions of 1848 may be the most underestimated event in European history. The revolutions set the stage for the rise of socialism and a growing division between the middle and working class.

In addition, the Romantic age of revolution seemed dead and, philosophically, many intellectuals turned to a more hard-headed realist and materialist vision of the world. Most importantly, conservatives learned the lesson that they could no longer ignore nationalism; so if they wished to stay in power, they had to appeal to public opinion and sponsor movements of national unity from the top down. It is to this topic that the next chapter is devoted.

• SKILL SET

One pundit argued that the revolutions of 1848 were “a turning point at which history failed to turn.” It will be useful to take this notion and turn it into a Periodization (PER) question, identifying the ways in which this statement is true or false by tabulating the evidence, particularly in subsequent decades. The short answer is that they helped establish the modern world. How and why?