Restoration, Ideologies, and Upheavals 1815-1850

19th-Century Ideological Influences

Conservatives wanted to roll back the clock to the days before the French Revolution to restore the monarchies in all countries, including France. These voices prevailed at the Congress of Vienna and remained strong, especially in Russia, Prussia, and Austria. Conservatives benefitted from the disillusionment that many Europeans felt after 1815. They viewed Napoleon as a tyrant who ruled for his own benefit, and they also feared the chaos that the Reign of Terror had brought to France. They favored monarchies over republics, tradition over revolution, and established religion over Enlightenment philosophy. An influential spokesperson for conservatism was Edmund Burke, a British politician who argued that the revolutionaries were wrong to believe they could construct an entirely new government based on reason. Instead, he believed that stable, strong governments evolve over long periods of time and are grounded in tradition. The church, the state, and the traditional family could not just be tossed aside for a new society based on nature and reason. Not surprisingly, conservatism was favored by royal families, and at the Congress of Vienna, both Alexander I of Russia and Metternich of Austria were strong conservatives. Their vision led to the restoration of Bourbon rule of France and defended monarchical government throughout the century.

The Pillars of Conservatism

The guardians of the European restoration put in place at the Congress of Vienna were Russia, Austria, and Prussia. They were all absolutist states quite alarmed by the French Revolution and Napoleon's conquests, and they reacted by centralizing political power, building larger armies, and increasing control over their subjects.

Russia

After the death of Catherine the Great in 1796, conservatism was reinforced in Russia by the excesses of the French Revolution, and her successors of the early 19th century responded to the Napoleonic Wars with the same cautious protection of the rights of monarchs. Tsar Alexander I successfully led Russia to resist Napoleon's 1812 invasion, which quelled his

early leanings toward liberal philosophy, and he responded by supporting conservative forces at the Congress of Vienna. He formed a Holy Alliance with Austria and Prussia as a defense of the established order, which included both monarchs and religious officials. Despite Alexander I's efforts, he was not able to stop the filtering of liberal ideas into Russia, which inspired some intellectuals to question the status quo. Nationalist problems erupted in Poland, where the tsar ruled as a limited monarch, having granted a constitution that provided for an elected Polish parliament and guaranteed freedom of speech and the press. By 1818, Alexander had begun retracting these concessions, and Polish students and military officers responded by forming secret nationalist societies to plot for change by illegal means. The government then cracked down, arresting student leaders and dismissing professors who promoted reforms.

Original Document: Russia's Policy of "Official Nationality"

Tsar Nicholas I (r. 1825-1855) resisted all attempts to reform Russia, largely because he wanted to protect the empire from the political turmoil that had occurred in western Europe during the Napoleonic era. In the document excerpted below, Nicholas' minister of education, S.S. Uvarov, explains the basic principles behind the tsar's policy of official nationality."

"In the midst of rapid collapse in Europe of religious and civil institutions, at the time of a general spread of destructive ideas .. .it was necessary to establish our fatherland on firm foundations upon which is based the well-being, strength, and life of a people; it was necessary to find the principles which form the distinctive character of Russia, and which belong only to Russia .... Sincerely and deeply attached to the church of his fathers, the Russian has of old considered it the guarantee of social and family happiness ...A Russian devoted to his fatherland, will agree as little to the loss of a single dogma of our Orthodoxy as to the theft of a single pearl from the tsar's crown. Autocracy constitutes the main condition of the political existence of Russia ... An innumerable majority of the subjects of Your Majesty feel this truth ... The saving conviction that Russia lives and is protected by the spirit of a strong, humane, and enlightened autocracy must permeate popular education ... Together with these two national principles there is a third, no less important, no less powerful: nationality."

Shortly after Alexander's death, his successor, Nicholas I, faced the Decembrist Revolt, a major uprising in 1825 led by western-oriented army

officers who sought political reform. As most tsars before him had done, Nicholas responded with repression, and after crushing the rebellion, he paid little attention to reform for the rest of his reign. Newspapers and schools were strictly supervised, political opponents were arrested, and the secret police was expanded – all in an effort to protect Russia from western influences that threatened Slavic roots. Russian tsars continued their efforts to maintain political authority, but at the same time, they kept their ambitions to expand Russian territories, which meant that they became embroiled in international politics. For example, Russia supported many nationalist movements in the Balkans, even though they reflected liberalism. The Russian desire to weaken the Ottoman Empire by stirring up trouble among its subjects was greater than the Russian commitment to conservatism, especially since Russia stood to gain territory at the expense of the Ottomans.

Russia's resistance to westernization during the early 19th century extended to industrialization. In response to western demands for Russian grain, the government tightened the labor obligations of serfs rather than looking to technology to increase production. In Russia, as well as most other areas of eastern Europe, the labor system remained feudalistic, although some western machinery was imported and a few factories opened to imitate those in western Europe. This pattern continued until Russia's territorial ambitions were stopped by its loss of the Crimean War in 1856, when the superior technology and war tactics of France and Britain clearly showed how far behind Russia had fallen. This humiliating defeat robbed Russia of the opportunity to encroach on the periphery of the weakening Ottoman Empire, and served as a wakeup call that its power could no longer be promoted by conservatism alone.

Austria

The Habsburgs ruled many nationalities in Austria, so to no other country were the programs of liberalism and nationalism more potentially dangerous. Germans, Czechs, Slovaks, Slovenes, Italians, Hungarians, and Poles populated the empire, and the Austrian government stood firm in its resolution to maintain control over them. So far as Metternich and other Austrian officials were concerned, the recognition of political rights of any of these groups would mean the probable demise of the empire. If Austria permitted representative government, Metternich feared that the national groups would create internal disruptions that would weaken Austria's international power.

About one quarter of Austria's population was German, and so Metternich worked hard to prevent the formation of a German national state that would unite people both inside and outside Austria's borders. He dominated the newly formed German Confederation, and many political leaders in Austria were German, so their loyalty to the Habsburgs was reinforced. The main sign of German resistance came from university students, who formed nationalist student societies, or *Burschenschaften*, but Metternich convinced the leaders of the biggest German states to issue decrees – most famously, the Carlsbad Decrees – to censure and dissolve them. Secret societies also formed in Austria's Italian provinces, but even though they attracted tens of thousands of members, they had no common program across Italy and no central organization. The Austrian domestic policies aimed at restraining nationalist impulses largely succeeded until the 1840s through heavy censorship and the use of a secret police that opened letters of even the highest officials.

Prussia

Like Austria, Prussia exerted its influence over the states of the German Confederation and worked to control the formation of a German national state. In 1815, Frederick William III recognized German enthusiasm for victory in the "War of Liberation" by promising some mode of constitutional government for those under Prussian control. First he stalled on his pledge, and in 1817 he rescinded it, and instead created a new Council of State. This Council increased administrative efficiency, but it was not based on constitutionalism. In 1819 Frederick moved further away from reform when he replaced his most liberal-leaning ministers with staunch conservatives. By 1823 he had established eight provincial estates, or advisory councils, that were dominated by the landholding Junker class, and had solidified the old bonds linking monarchy, army, and landholders that had long characterized the social and political order in Prussia.

Meanwhile, Prussian influence increased. Its national education system included the new but prestigious University of Berlin, the army was more efficiently organized than ever, and its policies included measures that stimulated economic growth. In 1818 Prussia lowered tariffs, encouraging raw materials to enter Prussia, and its tariff system was adopted by many of the smaller surrounding states. The Prussian customs union came to be called the Zollverein, and by 1833 most German governments except Austria had joined it. These successful Prussian policies supported economic liberalism based on

free-market principles, but the Prussian conservative state denied political liberalism, which would have required individual rights of freedom of speech, press, and assembly.

Conservatism in Britain and France

In both Britain and France, conservative governments worked to maintain the old order reflected in the agreements forged by the Congress of Vienna. Although the British Parliament shared power with the king, both the House of Commons and the House of Lords were dominated by the aristocratic landowning classes. Within Parliament, both political factions – the Tories and the Whigs – were composed of aristocrats, although the Whigs were beginning to receive support from the new industrial middle class. Most ministers before 1830 were Tories, and demands for electoral reforms were repressed.

In France, Louis XVIII, the restored Bourbon king, understood the need to accept some of the changes brought to France by the Revolution and Napoleon. For example, he accepted Napoleon's Civil Code, which recognized the principle of equality before the law. The property rights of those who had bought confiscated lands during the revolution were also preserved. France was permitted a constitution called the Charter, presented as a gift from the king and not as a right. It granted the legislature more authority than Napoleon had allowed but left the government largely in the hands of the king. Still, Louis pursued a course of administrative efficiency and political restraint. However, when Louis died in 1824, he was succeeded by his brother, Charles X, who attempted to restore the old regime as completely as possible. His government gave the Church fuller control of education and granted a cash indemnity to those who had lost land in the Revolution. In 1829 he filled his cabinet with ultraroyalists who supported an unrestrained monarchy. When the Chamber of Deputies (the French Parliament) rejected his ministers, the situation led quickly to another revolution in France.

Examining the Evidence: The Revival of Religion

The restoration of monarchical government was not the only conservative reaction to the revolutionary upheavals of the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Another strong impulse was the revival of religious groups to reinforce the status quo. In France the Catholic Church sent missionaries to hold public ceremonies where people could express repentance for the

outrages of revolution. The pope reestablished the Jesuit order, which had been disbanded during the Enlightenment, and other religious societies were sponsored by conservative governments to combat reformers.

The religious revival, however, did not always support the status quo. For example, the English Methodists – who first appeared during the 18th century – continued to challenge the practices and beliefs of the Anglican Church. Protestants also sponsored religious movements in Germany and the United States, where a second "Great Awakening" (the original one had occurred in the early 18th century) emphasized emotional religious ceremonies that included dancing, falling into trances, and speaking in tongues. These practices reflected a rejection of the Enlightenment reverence for reason, and instead rallied people to openly express and spread their religious beliefs and feelings.