Restoration, Ideologies, and Upheavals 1815-1850

19th-Century Ideological Influences

The restoration of monarchical power and the redrawing of the map of Europe to maintain a balance of power among nations were efforts to reverse the effects of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars. However, those important events were not just forgotten, but instead continued to shape the developments of the 19th century. As a result, the ideologies of conservatism, liberalism, and radicalism each found supporters with different visions for the organization of European societies.

Liberalism

Liberals were interested in checking the power of monarchs and increasing parliamentary authority. They supported the original goals of the French Revolution, including a government defined by constitutional law and the guarantee of personal freedoms of religion, press, and assembly. Although Napoleon called his own system liberalism, the term was first used in Spain among opponents of Napoleonic occupation. When the word began to be used in France, it became associated with opposition to royalism after the restoration of the Bourbons in 1814. Liberal political theorists also had influence in England, and a new Liberal Party became an important force in British politics during the 1850s. The meaning of liberalism varied from country to country, but it usually included an emphasis on the rights and liberties that individuals should possess as citizens. Most liberals were bourgeoisie – middle-class professionals or businessmen – who wanted their views to be represented in government and their economic goals to be unhampered by government interference. Liberals clearly emphasized the right to own private property, and they advocated free trade with low or no tariffs so as to allow individual economic opportunities to blossom. They generally thought of churches and landed aristocracies as obstacles to advancement. They wanted orderly change through legislation, and they disapproved of the instability that revolution brought.

Perspectives: John Stuart Mill *On Liberty*

John Stuart Mill was one of Britain' s most famous voices for liberalism, and his essay, *On Liberty,* excerpted below is a classic statement of the liberal belief in individual freedom.

Wood

" ....There is a sphere of action in which society, as distinguished from the individual has, if any, only an indirect interest; comprehending all that portion of a person's life and conduct which affects only himself, or if it also affects others, only with their free, voluntary and undeceived consent and participation....This then is the appropriate region of human liberty. It comprises, first, the inward domain of consciousness; demanding liberty of conscience in the most comprehensive sense; liberty of thought and feeling; absolute freedom of opinion and sentiment on all subjects, practical or speculative, scientific, moral, or theological…. The peculiar evil of silencing the expression of an opinion is, that it is robbing the human race; posterity as well as the existing generation; those who dissent from the opinion, still more than those who hold it. If the opinion is right, they are deprived of the opportunity of exchanging error for truth; if wrong, they lose, what is almost as great a benefit, the clearer perception and livelier impression of truth, produced by its collision with error."

Radicals emphasized equality more than liberty, with most advocating wider voting rights and more direct government participation for ordinary people. The term "radicalism" originated in England about 1820 with a group called the Philosophical Radicals, composed of both working-class leaders and new industrial capitalists who were still unrepresented in Parliament. These English radicals had much in common with the rationalist French *philosophes* before the Revolution because they wanted a total reconstruction of laws, courts, prisons, and municipal organization. Many promoted social reforms to help the poor gain some measure of economic security. On the Continent, radicalism was represented by militant republicanism, which first was voiced during the Reign of Terror, and its supporters valued equality and justice above all. Most republicans were drawn from intelligentsia, such as students and writers, and from working-class leaders, and they generally supported revolution as a valid method for achieving their goals. Most were bitterly anticlerical, and they regarded the Catholic Church as the enemy of reason and liberty. They were opposed to monarchy of any kind, even to constitutional monarchy, and they often organized in national international secret societies to plot the overthrow of existing regimes by force.

A small branch of radicals attacked private property as the source of inequality and urged the government to actively work to increase equality. They called themselves socialists, and they regarded the existing economic system as profoundly unjust, since it created great inequalities between the

workers and their employers. They generally favored some kind of communal ownership of banks, factories, machines, land, and transportation. Socialists flatly rejected the laissez-faire beliefs of the liberals, and they believed that the French Revolution only promoted civil and legal equality, and that a further step toward social and economic equality was necessary. This branch of radicalism gave inspiration to Karl Marx, sometimes known as the father of communism, by the mid-19th century.

Nationalism

Nationalism was a theme that both liberals and radicals often supported, and political protests against the traditional monarchies were common, even in the more conservative states. Nationalism first rose as a force for change during the French Revolution, and Napoleon forwarded his own agenda for France by appealing to the growing sense of French unity based on common institutions, traditions, language, and customs. After Napoleon's defeat, nationalism grew to be an even more powerful ideology as it spread to people outside France. Many people came to believe that each nationality should have its own government. For example, German nationalists wanted national unity with one central government for Germany, and they pushed to make the German Confederation a true nation-state.

Many people in eastern Europe who were subjects to the monarchs also advocated self determination, or the right to establish their own autonomy. For example, the Hungarian nationalist movement wanted to be free from domination by the Austrian Habsburgs.

Nationalism was an important tool for almost all states, and even the conservative rulers often called upon their subjects' devotion to their nations to strengthen the power of the governments. For example, the Russian tsars encouraged all Russians to be devoted to the "fatherland" under their enlightened autocracy. However, nationalism often threatened to upset the existing political order, both internationally and nationally, so it can be seen as a form of radicalism. A united Germany or Italy would upset the balance of power established in 1815, and independence for subject people would mean the breakup of great empires, such as Austria and Russia. Because many European states were multinational, conservatives tried very hard to repress nationalism. At the same time, in the first half of the 19th century, nationalism was supported by many liberals who believed that freedom could be realized only by people who ruled themselves. To them, the boundaries of government should coincide with those of nationalities.