CHAPTER 24

The Advance of Democracy in Great Britain, France, and Italy

TIME LINE

1851	Louis Napoleon Bonaparte becomes French president for life
1852	Louis Napoleon Bonaparte establishes the Second Empire
1867	The British Parliament passes the Reform Bill of 1867
1868-1874	British Prime Minister William E. Gladstone heads his "Great Ministry"
1870	The French Third Republic is established
1871	The Paris Commune is suppressed
1874-1880	Benjamin Disraeli serves as British prime minister
1875	The French adopt constitutional laws for the Third Republic
1884	British farm workers win the right to vote
1886	The British Parliament rejects Irish home rule
1889	General Georges Boulanger challenges the French Third Republic
1894	A French army court-martial convicts Captain Alfred Dreyfus of treason
1900	The British Labor party is established
1903-1914	Giovanni Giolitti dominates Italian politics
1905	A Liberal government takes office in Great Britain
1911	The British Parliament Act of 1911 is adopted
1912	Italy adopts universal manhood suffrage

In the late nineteenth century, the cause of democracy advanced in Great Britain, France, and Italy.

In Great Britain, reform bills passed in 1867and I884established close to universal manhood suffrage, while the Parliament Act of 1911

reduced the power of the aristocratic House of Lords. In addition to expanding voting rights, the reform programs of British governments during this period laid the foundations of the welfare state. The controversial issue of home rule for Ireland remained unresolved, however.

In France, Louis Napoleon Bonaparte subverted the Second Republic and created the Second Empire. Following the overthrow of Napoleon III in 1870, the French established the democratic Third Republic. France remained a deeply divided nation, however, and the leaders of the Third Republic did relatively little to promote economic and social reform.

Italy lagged considerably behind Great Britain and France in the process of democratization. In the years following the achievement of unification in 1861, political power was the monopoly of an upper-middle-class and upper-class oligarchy, and universal manhood suffrage was not established until 1912. Italy remained a poor country whose leaders responded to popular unrest with repression rather than reform.

Great Britain

The Reform Bill of 1867

During the generation after the passage of the Reform Bill of 1832, demands for further parliamentary reform mounted.

In the mid-l860s, Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881), the Conservative Party leader in the House of Commons, decided that the Conservatives should push for the adoption of a new reform bill before their opponents, the Liberals, did.

A Conservative-dominated Parliament passed the Reform Bill of 1867. Some seats in the House of Commons were redistributed. More important, however, was the extension of the right to vote to most of Great Britain's urban workers.

Although Disraeli served briefly as prime minister in 1868, the parliamentary elections that year resulted in a Liberal victory.

Gladstone's "Great Ministry"

From 1868 to 1874, William E. Gladstone (1809-1898), the

Liberals' leader, served as prime minister, heading his "Great Ministry."

Reform Program

The British Parliament enacted an extensive reform program. In 1870, competitive examinations were introduced for the civil service. The Education Bill of 1870 provided financial support to local school boards to operate free nonsectarian elementary schools. In addition, church-operated and other voluntary elementary schools continued to receive assistance from the state. The expansion of elementary education helped create a literate electorate.

In 1871, the workers' right to organize unions and to strike gained legal recognition, although the ban on picketing remained. The Ballot Act of 1872 introduced the secret ballot in British elections, while a reform of the judiciary was enacted in 1873.

Despite this reform program, Gladstone maintained the *laissez-faire* tradition of the Liberals and opposed state intervention in economic affairs.

Disraeli as Prime Minister

In 1874, the Conservatives won control of the House of Commons, and Disraeli became prime minister, holding office until 1880. He promoted a program known as Tory Democracy, designed to benefit the working classes and to win increased popular support for the Conservative party. The Conservatives were less committed to laissez-faire doctrine than were their Liberal opponents.

Labor and Housing Reforms

A series of laws passed in 1875 expanded the government's role in economic affairs. The Factory Act extended earlier legislation regulating working conditions, while the Public Health Act expanded the role of the state in urban sanitation. The Artisans' Dwellings Act authorized local authorities to carry out slum clearance programs and to construct public housing. Another law gave additional rights to labor unions and legalized picketing by

striking workers.

The Reform Bill of 1884

During his second administration, from 1881 to 1885, Gladstone won the adoption of the Reform Bill of 1884, which extended the right to vote to most farm workers.

The Irish Question

The Irish question most concerned Gladstone during his second administration and his third (1 886) and fourth (1 892-1894) administrations, as well.

Home Rule

Since the adoption of the Act of Union in 1801, Ireland had been united with Great Britain and was governed by the British Parliament. Following the enactment of Catholic Emancipation in 1829, the number of Irish Catholics in the House of Commons grew considerably. These members became more outspoken in their demand for home rule under which Ireland would acquire its own parliament, although the British government would retain control over foreign policy. Irish home rule faced the strong opposition of the six predominantly Protestant counties of northern Ireland (Ulster) and many in Great Britain.

In 1886, Gladstone introduced a home-rule bill, but a coalition of Conservatives and anti-home-rule Liberals defeated it. A second home-rule bill, also sponsored by Gladstone, went down to defeat in 1893.

Conflict Between Ulster and Nationalists

In 1914, the Liberals finally succeeded in pushing an Irish home-rule bill through Parliament. It could not be enforced, however, because of opposition in Ulster, where the Protestants organized an illegal militia. In response, the Irish nationalists organized a militia of their own. By the summer of 1914, Ireland stood on the brink of civil war.

The Development of the Labor Party

During the late nineteenth century, Britain's labor unions grew

in membership and began to have an impact on politics. In 1900, the unions joined with the Fabian Society and other groups to form the Labor Party.

The Fabian Society

Formed in 1883, the Fabian Society advocated a gradual approach to socialism, with the ultimate objective of establishing public ownership of the means of production and distribution. Among the major leaders of the Fabian Society were Sidney (1859-1947) and Beatrice Webb (1858-1943), the playwright George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950), and the writer H. G. Wells (1866-1946).

Growth of the Labor Party

In 1906, twenty-nine Laborites won seats in the House of Commons. As its popular support grew, the Labor Party ultimately replaced the Liberals as one of the two major political parties in Great Britain.

The Liberal Government

In the years after 1905, the Liberals dominated the government. Under the leadership of Prime Ministers Henry Campbell-Bannerman (1836-1908) and Herbert Asquith (1852-1928) the Liberals enacted an extensive reform program.

Economic Reforms

In an effort to retain the support of industrial workers, the Liberals enacted the Workmen's Compensation Act of 1906, expanding programs of aid to workers injured on the job. The Old Age Pensions Act of 1909 provided state-supported pensions for low-income citizens over the age of seventy.

The Parliament Act of 1911

In 1909, Chancellor of the Exchequer David Lloyd George (1863-1945) presented a budget calling for tax increases to support the new programs of social insurance and naval expansion. This "People's Budget" provided for higher income-tax rates for the wealthy and increases in inheritance taxes, as well as new taxes on the unearned increase in the value of land.

The refusal of the House of Lords to pass the budget led to a political crisis. Responding to the government's appeal, King George V (r. 1910-1936) agreed to create enough new Liberal lords to insure the passage of the Parliament Act of 1911. Faced with this threat, the Lords passed the bill.

Under the provisions of the Parliament Act of 1911, the House of Lords could no longer refuse to pass a money bill. Furthermore, the act provided that the House of Lords could not prevent the adoption of other legislation if the House of Commons passed it three times in a period of not less than two years. By weakening the power of the aristocratic House of Lords, the Parliament Act marked another step toward the creation of full political democracy in Great Britain.

Other Reforms

In 1911,the Liberal government won parliamentary approval for a bill providing for the payment of salaries to members of the House of Commons. The National Insurance Act, adopted the same year, established a system of health and unemployment insurance, financed by contributions from employers, workers, and the state. In 1912,a minimum wage law was passed.

The reform program of the Liberal government brought economic benefits to Britain's working people and helped move the country in the direction of a welfare state.

France

Louis Napoleon Bonaparte and the Second Republic

After winning the presidency of the Second Republic in December 1848, Louis Napoleon Bonaparte (1808-1873) set out to consolidate his support among the army, the middle class, the peasantry, and the Roman Catholic Church. In 1849, he sent French troops to Rome to help restore the authority of Pope Pius IX (r. 1846-1878) in the wake of the Italian revolutions of 1848. He also increased the influence of the Catholic Church in French education.

In December 1851,Louis Napoleon proclaimed himself

president for life, and France's new constitution gave him ultimate authority. As head of the armed forces, he had the power to declare war and make peace. He also dominated the legislative process. The Council of State, whose members he appointed, drafted legislation, while the Senate, which he also appointed, could reject laws it judged unconstitutional. The Legislative Body, elected by universal manhood suffrage, could accept or reject legislation submitted to it but could neither initiate nor amend legislation. The government influenced elections for the Legislative Body by providing financial support to pro-government candidates and by using local officials to count the ballots.

Napoleon III (r. 1852-1870)

In late 1852, a plebiscite endorsed the reestablishment of the Bonapartist empire, and on December 2, 1852, Louis Napoleon Bonaparte became Napoleon III. (The Bonapartists regarded Napoleon 1's young son, who had died in 1832, as Napoleon 11, although he had never reigned.) In 1853, the emperor married Eugénie de Montijo (1826-1920), a Spanish countess.

The Authoritarian Empire

From 1852 to 1860, Napoleon III was at the height of his power. The government maintained strict censorship of the press and prohibited the establishment of political associations.

Economic Programs

The emperor promoted economic expansion, and the prosperity of these years helped keep popular discontent at a minimum. The government established two investment banks, the Crédit Mobilier and the Crédit Foncier, to assist the development of railroads, public utilities, industry, and agriculture.

Aid to Workers and Peasants

The government also enacted measures to benefit the workers, including programs to improve housing and to construct hospitals and homes for the elderly. Private systems of social insurance for workers were encouraged, and labor unions received limited legal recognition.

Peasants were helped by the building and improvement of roads and canals, the draining of swamps, and the promotion of scientific agriculture and animal husbandry.

Public Works

Napoleon III initiated extensive programs of public works, which provided employment. The most famous of these projects involved the rebuilding of much of Paris under the direction of Baron Georges Haussmann (1809-1 89 1).

The Liberal Empire

After 1860, several factors combined to cause Napoleon III to lose both popularity and his ability to control the government.

Domestic and Foreign Problems

In the economic sphere, the emperor's free-trade policy began to have a negative effect. In particular, the Cobden Treaty of 1860, which he negotiated with Great Britain, lowered French tariffs on imports of British manufactured goods, which now flooded the country to the detriment of French industry.

Napoleon III also suffered from the results of his inept intervention in Italy in 1859 (see Chapter 23).

The emperor sought to strengthen his position by making concessions. In 1860, he authorized both the Senate and the Legislative Body to discuss the speech from the throne and respond to it, and in the following year, the budgetary powers of the Legislative Body were increased.

Intervention in Mexico

In 1863, Napoleon III began his ill-fated intervention in Mexico, attempting to install the Austrian Archduke Maximilian (1832-1867), the brother of Emperor Francis Joseph, as the French puppet emperor. The United States protested but was unable to take effective action before the Civil War ended in 1865. In 1866, Napoleon III abandoned his efforts to create a French domain in Mexico. Mexican revolutionaries executed Maximilian the following year.

Political Concessions

Both the Maximilian affair and the Prussian defeat of Austria in 1866 further weakened Napoleon III. In 1867, he expanded the role of the Senate in the legislative process, and he agreed in 1868 to end press censorship and to permit political meetings to be held under government supervision.

Opposition to Napoleon III continued to mount, and in July 1869, he once again expanded the powers of the Legislative Body, granting it the authority to initiate legislation, and in December, he appointed a cabinet that represented a majority in the Legislative Body. In April 1870, the Senate became a true upper house, with the power to pass on legislation.

End of the Second Empire

The final crisis for the Second Empire came in the Franco-German War of 1870. At Sedan on September 2, the Germans captured Napoleon III. In Paris, radicals proclaimed the creation of the Third Republic.

The Paris Commune

While radicals dominated Paris and other major cities, the provinces were more conservative. In February 1871, monarchist candidates won a majority of seats in the new National Assembly.

The Third Republic also confronted a threat from radicals in Paris. On March 17, 1871, Adolphe Thiers (1797-1877), who headed the government, ordered the dissolution of the Paris National Guard. The radicals responded by electing a new city government, the Paris Commune.

Thiers decided to crush the Paris Commune. On May 8, the army began a bombardment of Paris, and on May 21, troops entered the city. During the following week, the army reestablished the government's control over the capital, taking about 20,000 lives in the process.

The Constitutional Laws

An attempt to restore the monarchy failed as a result of the rivalry between the Bourbon and Orleanist claimants to the throne, and in 1875 the constitutional laws for the Third Republic

were adopted. These laws established a weak government, with authority centered in parliament. The parliament consisted of two houses, the Chamber of Deputies, elected by universal manhood suffrage, and the indirectly elected Senate. The executive functions of government were exercised by the cabinet, headed by a premier and responsible to the parliament. The president of the republic, elected by both houses of parliament for a term of seven years, had relatively little power. Their history since 1789 had taught the French that a strong executive was likely to seek to establish his arbitrary authority.

The government's effectiveness was further weakened by the multiparty system. Since no one party could command a majority in parliament, coalition cabinets were necessary. These coalitions often proved fragile as a result of disagreements among the parties and their leaders.

Anticlericalism

The Roman Catholic Church had generally supported the monarchist cause, and during the 1880s, the republican leaders promoted an anticlerical campaign, designed to reduce the church's influence in national life. The government established a system of free secular elementary schools to compete with schools controlled by the church. The Jesuit Order was expelled from France, and the name of God was removed from oaths.

The Boulanger Affair

In the late 1880s, the republic's survival was threatened by the emergence of General Georges Boulanger (1837-189 1). A popular minister of war, Boulanger benefited from revelations of financial scandals involving a number of prominent republican politicians. In 1889,it appeared that Boulanger might attempt to carry out a coup d'état with monarchist and clerical support. He failed to do so, however, and instead fled the country. The Boulanger Affair discredited the monarchists and thus served to strengthen the republic.

The Dreyfus Affair

For several years around the turn of the century, France was tom apart by the Dreyfus Affair.

In December 1894, an army court-martial convicted Captain Alfred Dreyfus (1859-1939, a Jewish officer, of conveying secret information to the Germans, and he was sentenced to imprisonment in the penal colony of Devil's Island in French Guiana.

Some doubts remained about Dreyfus's guilt, however. In early 1896, Colonel Georges Picquart (1854-1914), the new head of the French intelligence service, developed evidence indicating that Major Ferdinand Esterhazy (1847-1923) was the guilty party, although he was promptly acquitted by a court-martial. It was also revealed that certain key documents used by the prosecution against Dreyfus had been forged.

A bitter conflict developed. On one level, the issue involved the question of Dreyfus's guilt or innocence. On another level, it was a conflict between the Dreyfusards, who supported both Dreyfus's innocence and the cause of the republic and anticlericalism, and the anti-Dreyfusards, who insisted on Dreyfus's guilt and supported the cause of the monarchists, the army, and the church. The anti-Dreyfusards were often openly anti-Semitic.

Zola's "J'Accuse"

In 1898, the novelist Emile Zola (1840-1902), a Dreyfusard, published a newspaper article entitled "*J'Accuse*" ("I Accuse"). Zola charged the army with forging the evidence that convicted Dreyfus and with deliberately suppressing evidence that would vindicate him. A new court-martial found Dreyfus guilty once again, although this time with "extenuating circumstances." The French president pardoned Dreyfus, and in 1906, the French supreme court invalidated the convictions handed down by the two courts-martial.

Renewed Anticlericalism

The victory of the Dreyfusards was a decisive defeat for the

ultraconservative officers who dominated the French army and for the monarchists and the church, as well. The government now renewed its anticlerical campaign, adopting laws to exclude members of Catholic religious orders from teaching. In 1905, the government abrogated Napoleon's Concordat of 1801. Church and state were now separated.

French Socialism

Focusing their attention on the struggle against the monarchists and on the anticlerical campaign, the French republicans showed relatively little interest in the problems of the country's workers. In 1905, several socialist groups joined under the leadership of Jean Jaures (1859-1914) and Jules Guesde (1845-1922) to form the United Socialist Party, which sought to represent the interests of the workers.

Italy

Italy After Unification

When the Kingdom of Italy was established in 1861, Victor Emmanuel II (r. 1861-1878), the Piedmontese king, became king of Italy. The Piedmontese constitution, the Statuto of 1848, was the model for the new Italian constitution. The two-house parliament consisted of the Senate, whose members included aristocrats and officials appointed by the king, and the Chamber of Deputies, which was elected by property-qualified voters. Executive authority was entrusted to a premier and cabinet, who were responsible to the parliament. While the political system was liberal, it was not democratic. In a population of 25 million, only about 500,000 possessed enough property to qualify as voters.

Economically, Italy was poor, overpopulated, and underdeveloped. It lacked raw materials and produced no coal or iron. This paucity of resources hindered the country's economic and social development. Some industrialization had occurred in northern Italy, but the region continued to lag behind most of the rest of Western Europe. In the south, impoverished and illiterate

peasants lived in miserable conditions, reminiscent of medieval serfdom.

The Roman Question

Following the Italian seizure of Rome in 1870, Italian politics was troubled by the Roman Question, the conflict between the papacy and the Italian state. Pope Pius IX (r. 1846-1878) declared himself to be a "prisoner of the Vatican." He refused to recognize the Italian state and instructed Italy's Catholics not to participate in politics.

The conflict with the papacy continued until the negotiation of the Lateran accords in 1929 (see Chapter 31).

Political Developments

In the years following unification, Italy's governments were dominated by upper-middle-class and upper-class liberals from northern Italy who had been political allies of Cavour in the struggle for unification. The multiparty system made government by coalition necessary, and the coalitions were often unstable.

Economic and Political Unrest

Poor economic conditions led to considerable unrest. In 1893, serious peasant revolts broke out in Sicily and spread to other areas.

Although socialist and anarchist organizations were outlawed in 1894, the unrest continued, reaching its culmination in riots that engulfed Milan and other northern Italian cities in the spring of 1898. During 1901 and 1902, Italy was swept by a great wave of strikes, which reflected both the continuing discontent of the workers and the spread of socialist and other radical ideas.

In 1900, an anarchist assassinated King Humbert I (r. 1878-1900), who had become king following the death of Victor Emmanuel II in 1878. Humbert was succeeded by Victor Emmanuel III (r. 1900-1946).

Giolitti's Premiership

During most of the period from 1903 to 1914, Giovanni Giolitti (1842-1928) held the premiership. In dealing with continuing unrest, Giolitti followed the policy of his predecessors, using repressive measures in an attempt to restore order.

The right to vote was gradually extended. In 1881, the voting age was reduced from twenty-five to twenty-one, and property requirements for voters were also reduced. In 1912, universal manhood suffrage was introduced.

During the decade prior to 1914, Italy experienced the fastest rate of economic growth in Western Europe. Nevertheless, neither the extension of the right to vote nor economic growth obscured the fact that Italy was a deeply troubled country.

In the late nineteenth century, Great Britain continued its reformist tradition, developing a more fully democratic political system and laying the foundations of the modern welfare state. While the new Labor party remained relatively weak in the years before 1914, its base of popular support gradually increased. The Irish question remained as Great Britain's most serious unresolved problem. The failure to enact Irish home rule left a legacy of hostility to trouble future generations.

In France, the democratic Third Republic replaced the Second Empire. France remained a deeply divided country, however. Monarchists and clericals rejected the republic, and France's political leaders were slow to enact economic and social reforms to meet the needs of the working masses.

In Italy, the political system gradually evolved toward democracy, but the country's stability was threatened by the unresolved Roman Question and unrest among peasants and workers.