

With the final defeat of Napoleon in 1815, Europe reached an important turning point. For more than 25 years, the most powerful political influence on the continent had been the French Revolution. Even though Napoleon did not always uphold the ideals of the Revolution—liberty, equality, and fraternity—he did carry its influence throughout Europe.

As long as Napoleon ruled France, the governments of other nations feared that France would export political unrest or rebellion and challenge their authority. Once they defeated Napoleon, the major European powers were determined to restore order, keep peace, and squelch the ideas of the Revolution. After 1815 they followed policies designed to maintain stability and to suppress any danger of political upheaval.

The Congress of Vienna

Stability could be achieved only by settling political and territorial questions arising from the Napoleonic Wars. The Congress of Vienna, a conference held in the Austrian capital, undertook the settling of these questions. The congress began in September 1814, while Napoleon was in exile on Elba. About 700 diplomats attended at one time or another. Napoleon's return from exile interrupted the congress in 1815, but after his final defeat at Waterloo, the congress resumed its work.

Despite the presence of many notable figures, only a few people made the real decisions at the Congress of Vienna. Great Britain, Austria, Russia, and Prussia had done the most to defeat Napoleon. Their four representatives were Lord Castlereagh (KAS·uhl·ray), foreign secretary of Great Britain; Prince Klemens von Metternich, chief minister of Austria and chairman of the conference; Czar Alexander I of Russia; and King Frederick William III of Prussia. Metternich, however, was the chief architect of the policies drawn up by the congress.

Surprisingly, the representative of defeated France, Charles Maurice de Talleyrand, played an important part at the Congress of Vienna. A shrewd negotiator, Talleyrand wielded great influence as the representative of Louis XVIII.

The Principles of the Congress of Vienna

Four principles guided the decisions of the Congress of Vienna. (1) **Legitimacy**, which meant that all former ruling families should be restored to their thrones, had to be upheld. (2) The balance of power had to be restored in Europe. This meant that the nations of Europe had to keep any one nation from becoming too powerful. (3) France had to be weakened. (4) The countries that suffered most at the hands of Napoleon, especially the four great powers—Great Britain, Austria, Russia, and Prussia—had to be compensated for their losses.

Legitimacy. At Talleyrand's urging, the Congress of Vienna made settlements based on the principle of legitimacy. The Bourbon monarchy, already restored in France, also returned to power in Spain and in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. Monarchies were also restored in Portugal and in the Kingdom of Sardinia.

Compensation and the balance of power. The winning powers soon quarreled over the division of spoils. The two most difficult problems concerned Poland and the German state of Saxony. From Prussia's Polish territory, Napoleon had created the Grand Duchy of Warsaw, which he had given to his faithful ally, the king of Saxony. Russia now demanded this territory. Prussia agreed to this, provided that the king of Saxony be deposed and Saxony be given to Prussia.

Both Great Britain and Austria opposed this arrangement. Great Britain did not want to see Russia become too strong. Austria feared that the addition of Saxony might make Prussia too powerful in German affairs. For a time the threat of war loomed. Then Talleyrand suggested a compromise that settled the argument. Most of what had been the Grand Duchy of Warsaw went to Russia. Prussia got the rest of it, along with part of Saxony (see map, this page).

The Netherlands, one of Napoleon's early conquests, received the Austrian Netherlands and became the single Kingdom of the Netherlands. As compensation for this loss, the Austrians gained the northern Italian states of Venetia and Lombardy. Austrian Hapsburgs also became rulers of the northern Italian states of Parma, Modena, and Tuscany.

In addition to gaining the largest share of the Grand Duchy of Warsaw, Russia had acquired Finland as a result of war with Sweden. Since Sweden had fought against Napoleon, it received Norway, formerly a Danish possession. This territorial adjustment punished Denmark for cooperating with Napoleon. Prussia, in addition to its share of

Saxony and Poland, received an area along the lower Rhine River.

Although Great Britain did not receive any territory in continental Europe, it did gain possessions overseas. They included several islands in the French West Indies and the Mediterranean island of Malta. From the Danish the British gained Helgoland, an island in the North Sea. From the Dutch they took Cape Colony in Africa and what became British Guiana in South America.

France held in check. All of this territorial reshuffling set up a ring of strong states around France so that it could not again threaten the peace of Europe. The diplomats, however, did not consider the feelings of the people who lived in these regions that changed hands. They parceled out territories as if these lands were uninhabited deserts.

France was stripped of its conquests, and its boundaries were returned to what they had been in 1792. In addition, it had to pay a large **indemnity**—a compensation to other nations for damages it had inflicted on them. France also had to pay for forts that the victorious nations now maintained on the French borders.

Reaction, Absolutism, and Nationalism

A time of **reaction** followed the first few years after the Napoleonic Era. This means that those in authority wanted to return to the conditions of an earlier period. **Reactionaries** are extremists who not only oppose change, but generally would like to turn the clock back to the time before certain changes occurred. After 1815 the victors in Europe attempted to restore conditions to what they had been before the French Revolution.

In Spain, the Two Sicilies, and the states of northern Italy, the reinstated rulers abolished the constitutions that had been adopted during Napoleon's rule. They returned to absolutism as if nothing had ever happened. Switzerland alone retained its constitutional government but had to promise to remain neutral in European wars. The European powers guaranteed this neutrality.

Napoleon's conquests resulted in the spread of new political ideas and the rise of nationalism, which the reactionary powers considered dangerous and tried to stamp out. National feelings began to have such wide influence that they became accepted as a basic political ideal. Writers, artists, and politicians promoted nationalism by stressing

the people's shared history, common language, or cultural achievements.

The desire for national unity caused concern among the major powers of the time, and they tried to hold it back. For a while they succeeded, and the Congress of Vienna left nationalist groups disappointed. Some Italians, for example, had hoped for a united Italy. Their hope went unfulfilled. To make matters worse, many Italian states were placed under a hated foreign rule. The major powers also blocked the desire of the Polish people for national independence. Nor was self-government granted to national groups living within the Austrian Empire.

The German desire for national unity came closer to fulfillment. Napoleon had consolidated many of the German states into the 16-member Confederation of the Rhine. Now more states, including Prussia, formed the German Confederation, which had 39 members. Austria dominated this confederation, since an Austrian delegate always presided over the confederation's assembly.

Alliances Among the Great Powers

The idea of revolution still haunted the governments of Europe. As a result, they believed that a special watch had to be kept for the lurking dangers that might upset the peace they had so painstakingly created.

The Quadruple Alliance. The four allies that had finally defeated Napoleon—Great Britain, Austria, Russia, and Prussia—agreed in 1815 to continue their alliance. This became known as the Quadruple Alliance. The chief purpose of the alliance was "to guarantee Europe from dangers by which she may still be menaced"—that is, revolutionary movements. Members of the alliance agreed to make sure that France carried out the terms of the peace treaty. They planned to hold periodic conferences to keep the major powers in agreement on matters that concerned them all.

The Holy Alliance. Czar Alexander I of Russia doubted that alliances alone could maintain peace and prevent revolutions. He firmly believed in absolute monarchy. However, he believed just as firmly that Christian moral principles and a strong sense of duty should guide monarchs. Shortly before joining the Quadruple Alliance, he urged that all rulers pledge themselves to rule as Christian princes by signing an agreement called the Holy

took many different forms in these countries, but certain key ideas remained identical. These included a belief in the importance of individual liberty—freedom of thought, religion, and economic opportunity. Above all, liberals hated the tyranny of absolute rule. Thus they worked to secure constitutions and other legal safeguards to limit governmental authority and protect civil liberties. Most liberals did not believe that all people should have the right to vote. Instead, most believed that voting should be limited to men with property and education.

Reaction to Metternich

Liberals reacted strongly to the decisions of the Congress of Vienna and to Metternich's actions to check liberalism. A number of uprisings occurred in Europe, and Metternich turned the Concert of Europe into an instrument of suppression. Whenever a threat to the status quo appeared, representatives of the five powers gathered to discuss ways of handling it. Austria, Russia, and Prussia went further. They agreed to act in concert to put down any attempt at revolution anywhere.

Great Britain could not agree to this last step. It opposed interfering in the attempts of liberal popular movements to overthrow absolute rulers. Great Britain itself had a representative government. The British people as a whole sympathized with other peoples in their struggles to institute similar governments. More important, Great Britain depended on trade. Meddling in the internal affairs of other countries might hurt British commerce. Under the influence of George Canning, who became foreign secretary in 1822, Great Britain withdrew from the Quintuple Alliance.

The Metternich System in Operation

For a time the Metternich system operated successfully. When discontent flared up among German university students in 1819, Metternich called together the leaders of the larger states of the German Confederation at Carlsbad in Bohemia. At his insistence they adopted measures known as the Carlsbad Decrees. The decrees placed students and faculty members of the universities under strict watch. They censored newspapers and periodicals and formed an organization to search for secret revolutionary activities. These measures prohibited

political reforms that conflicted with absolute monarchy.

Because of repression, several underground movements began that opposed the status quo. In 1820 a revolt in Spain forced King Ferdinand VII to restore the constitution he had abolished. This alarmed the four continental members of the Quintuple Alliance. Despite British protests they sent a French army to Spain. In 1823 they restored Ferdinand to full power, brutally crushing the revolt and its leaders.

The Spanish revolt inspired other uprisings in 1820. In the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, revolutionaries forced the ruler to grant a constitution. An Austrian army put down this revolt. In Portugal, too, the people forced the ruler to accept a constitution. A few years later, however, he abolished it and assumed absolute power.

In 1821 nationalism upset the international order when the Greeks revolted against the Ottoman Turks. Influenced by Metternich, European rulers refused Greek pleas for aid. However, many individuals came to the support of the Greeks, either as volunteers or by sending arms. One of these volunteers was Lord Byron, the British poet, who died of a fever in Greece in 1824.

Finally Russia, Great Britain, and France brought pressure on the Ottoman sultan. By the Treaty of Adrianople in 1829, Greece became an independent state. The Serbs and Romanians, to the north on the Balkan Peninsula, received some rights of self-government within the Ottoman Empire.

Greek independence demonstrated the first real failure of the Metternich system in Europe. It showed that the sense of nationalism encouraged by the French Revolution could not be suppressed forever.

Alliance. All the rulers of Europe signed it except the British king; the Turkish sultan, who was not a Christian; and the pope, who refused to be instructed in Christian principles by the Orthodox czar.

Those rulers who signed the Holy Alliance did so only to humor the czar and had little intention of following its principles. Castlereagh scoffingly called it "a piece of sublime mysticism and nonsense."

The Concert of Europe. Out of the more practical Quadruple Alliance grew what was called the Concert of Europe—a form of international government by concert, or agreement. It was aimed at maintaining peace and the *status quo* (a Latin phrase meaning roughly "the condition in which things exist"). In this case the status quo meant maintaining the balance of power established by the Congress of Vienna.

The first of the periodic conferences provided for by the Quadruple Alliance met in 1818. France, having fulfilled the terms of the peace settlements, returned to the European family of nations and was admitted to the Quadruple Alliance, making it a Quintuple Alliance. The Concert of Europe lasted until 1848.

The Age of Metternich

For 30 years after the Congress of Vienna, Prince Metternich influenced Europe so strongly that the

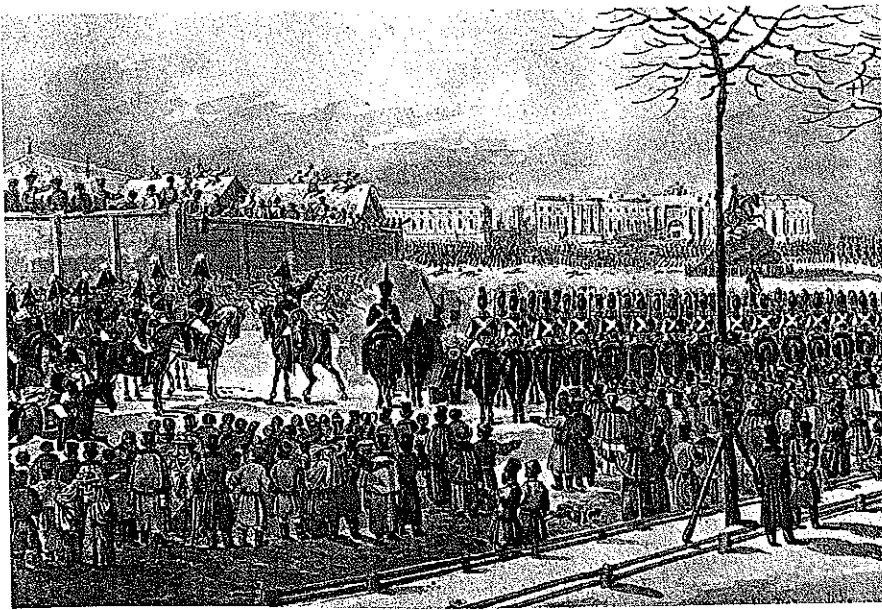
period is sometimes known as the Age of Metternich. A reactionary, Metternich believed strongly in absolute monarchy. He looked with fear and horror at constitutions and liberalism. The movement known as liberalism extended the principles of the American and French revolutions with their ideals of individual rights and the rule of law. Metternich believed in suppressing completely such ideas as freedom of speech, religion, and the press.

Metternich aimed to prevent war or revolution and to preserve absolutism. He had little difficulty achieving these goals in Austria. He set up an efficient secret police system to spy on revolutionary organizations and individuals. Liberals were imprisoned, fined, or exiled.

Because Austria controlled the German Confederation, Metternich persuaded the rulers of most German states to adopt the same methods. Hapsburg rulers in northern Italy made sure that no revolutionary movements would succeed there. In France, King Louis XVIII moved cautiously in domestic affairs. However, he quite willingly joined in suppressing revolutions elsewhere.

Political Liberalism

The ideas of liberals greatly influenced politics during the 1800s. These ideas could be seen in the internal political conflicts of Great Britain, France, Italy, Germany, and the United States. Liberalism



Learning from Pictures
Political liberalism in Russia culminated with the Decembrist uprising. After the death of Alexander I, troops rebelled against the new czar in December 1825. The uprising failed to establish either a democratic republic or a constitutional monarchy.