

quite content to share control of the country with the landowners, and this helps to account for the dismal failure of Chartism. Russia and Poland, of course, were in the grip of the repressive Nicholas System at this time, and liberal thought had been driven so far underground that there was no possibility of revolts.

Although the liberal and national revolutions had been, in Austria and Prussia particularly, of little avail, they had shaken the old order to its very foundations. They had shown that the peoples of Europe were unwilling to suffer governments to rule simply by the right of tradition. These peoples, having savoured liberty for a little while at the beginning of the revolutionary period, and having seen their nationalist aspirations on the brink of realisation, would no longer submit patiently to reactionary class government in a world that was being continually changed by economic progress. Emperor Ferdinand I, Metternich and other reactionaries of the first half of the nineteenth century had thought of the State, and not of the nation. They believed that "sovereigns should rule, and subjects should obey". In the new Europe the government would have to identify itself more closely with the sovereign nation, from which it would receive its authority to rule.

France

The "February Revolution" in France

During 1847-48 discontent increased in France. There were plots, insurrections and economic crises; and all Louis Philippe's enemies—the legitimists, Bonapartists, republicans, socialists, and liberals—stiffened their opposition to Guizot's corrupt, reactionary government. In the Chamber of Deputies Louis Thiers led the minority liberal party, which advocated a lowering of the property qualification for the suffrage in order to break the dominance of the upper bourgeoisie and the landowning aristocracy. This created a situation unique in the history of politics, for the opposing national leaders, Guizot and Thiers, were both famous historians, and each reported the circumstances from his own viewpoint.

Affairs became critical in February, 1848. To spread his propaganda in favour of electoral reforms, Thiers had adopted the practice of holding political banquets at which fervid orators denounced the government's inefficiency and corruptness. Similar methods were used by Louis Blanc, the socialist leader. Sensing that a revolutionary outbreak was possible, Guizot prohibited the holding of a monster banquet in Paris on February 22, George Washington's birthday. This infuriated the Parisian workingmen, who began to arm

themselves. Two days later the barricades were up. When the National Guard refused to fire on the revolutionaries, Guizot resigned, and Louis Philippe, after abdicating in favour of his grandson, the Count of Paris, fled to safety in England.

The Second French Republic (1848-52)

The *Bourgeois* Monarchy had fallen, and the liberals and socialists, ignoring the Count of Paris, proclaimed a republic. A provisional government, set up under the leadership of Alphonse Lamartine, the French poet, Louis Blanc and three other patriots, introduced manhood suffrage, restored individual liberties, arranged a trial for Blanc's "national workshops", and ordered the election of a national assembly to prepare a new constitution.

At this point, Lamartine, displaying a Machiavellian cunning rarely found in poets, completely outsmarted Louis Blanc. Instead of giving the national workshops a fair trial, the government put thousands of unemployed men to work with pick and shovel on the fortifications around Paris.

Because this system of poor relief, under which workers were paid high wages for performing useless tasks, was falsely described as a system of "national workshops", the socialists were completely discredited. To the French people it seemed that socialism was synonymous with waste and inefficiency. So when the elections for the National Assembly were held in April, Louis Blanc and the socialists suffered a crushing defeat. The republicans, who received strong support from the peasants, swept into power with an overwhelming majority. The French nation had shown clearly that, though it was prepared to experiment with republicanism, as it had in 1792, it would not risk radical economic experiments.

One of the first acts of the National Assembly was to disband the "national workshops". Immediately the barricades were up again in the streets of Paris, and, before their insurrection was suppressed, 3,000 workmen were killed in bloody fighting during the four "terrible June Days" (June 23-26, 1848). Many other insurgents were captured and shot, exiled or imprisoned.

The new constitution gave France a democratic form of government. The legislative power was to be exercised by a single assembly of 750 representatives elected by manhood suffrage, and the executive power was vested in a president elected directly by the people for a term of four years. Thus, temporarily, France became a democratic republic.

When the presidential elections were held, hundreds of thousands of Frenchmen recognised only one name on the voting lists. It was that of Bonaparte's nephew, Louis Napoleon,* who had twice made ludicrous attempts to dethrone Louis Philippe. But, the vagaries of democracy are such that the electorate forgot the ridicule Louis had brought upon himself, and recalled all the glory associated with a famous name. Louis Napoleon was elected with an absolute majority of 3,500,000 votes in a poll of seven and a half millions.

The electors were also stampeded by the "June Days" into remembering the Reign of Terror during the First French Republic, and more than two-thirds of the members elected to the Legislative Assembly were monarchists. The

*He was the son of Napoleon I's brother Louis, King of Holland, and of Hortense Beauharnais, daughter of the Empress Josephine by her first marriage.

Second Republic was not abolished immediately, however, because the monarchists were divided into three groups: legitimists, seeking a Bourbon restoration; Bonapartists, hailing Louis Napoleon as the next emperor; and constitutional monarchists, generally favouring an Orleanist restoration. For the first three years of his presidency Louis Napoleon chose conservative ministers "devoted to his own person", administered the country wisely and, playing on bourgeois fears of anarchy, prohibited political meetings and limited the freedom of the Press. A bill passed in 1850 went a step further. Universal male suffrage was replaced by a franchise dependent on tax and residential qualifications. As a result, practically every workingman lost the right to vote, and democracy succumbed after being existent for less than two years.

The fall of the Republic. With the support of the army and the monarchists, and with Catholic and landowning opinion strongly behind him, Louis Napoleon decided that the time was ripe for a military coup d'état. On December 2, 1851, he dissolved the Legislative Assembly. A plebiscite gave approval to his action and also to a new constitution, which extended Louis Napoleon's term as president to ten years and re-introduced universal male suffrage. Though this widening of the franchise pleased the masses, it was actually a sham, for Louis Napoleon and his Council of State controlled both policy-making and the administration.

Exactly a year after his first coup d'état, Louis Napoleon carried out a second one, proclaiming himself Emperor of France as Napoleon III.* When another plebiscite ratified the coup d'état, the Second Republic came to an end after an existence of only four years.

Almost all the hopes of the revolutionaries of 1848 were now dashed. The socialists had been crushed during the "terrible June Days"; democracy disappeared with the Act of 1850; and the coup d'état of 1852 put an end to republicanism. France was again a monarchy in which the wealthiest members of the bourgeoisie and the rich landowners were paramount. Conservatism held sway, as it had done prior to the "February Revolution" — a position that had the warm approval of the peasants, the Church and the other conservative elements in the community.

Revolts in Italy

News of revolutions in France and in the Austrian Empire inspired revolts against Metternichism in all Italian states. In the confusion Charles Albert, king of Piedmont-Sardinia, believing that the day of Italian deliverance had come, declared war on Austria and went to the help of Lombardy, which was in revolt. But assistance he had expected from other parts of Italy did not materialise. Neither Pope Pius IX nor the ruler of Naples and Sicily could afford to attack the Austrian Empire, and being virtually without allies, Charles Albert was defeated at Custoza in July, 1848, and again at Novara in March, 1849. After evacuating Lombardy, he abdicated in favour of his son, Victor Emmanuel II.

*In Bonapartist tradition, Napoleon I's son is regarded as Napoleon II.

* **The Roman Republic**

A republic set up in Rome by Joseph Mazzini also came to grief. Pius IX appealed to Louis Napoleon for assistance, and a French army soon drove out the republicans whose forces had been led by Giuseppe Garibaldi. Napoleon had responded quickly to the call for help, because he wished not only to consolidate Catholic support in France, but also to weaken Austria's hold on Italy.

* **Collapse of the revolts.** Everywhere things went badly for the Italian patriots. The Pope rescinded liberal reforms he had introduced; revolts in other states were put down, and, by the end of 1849, the Austrians were again firmly in control of northern Italy.

The Italian liberals and nationalists saw despair as the only result of their revolutions of 1848. Divided by their diverse aims, the patriotic parties had failed to co-operate. There was only one reason for rejoicing. Uttering the noble words, "My family knows the way to exile, but not to dishonour", Victor Emmanuel had refused to abrogate the liberal constitution granted by his father to Piedmont-Sardinia; and this was to be the "light on the hill" for Italian liberalism and nationalism.

Germany

During 1848 revolts occurred in almost every German state. On March 19 the Berliners rioted and, after some bloodshed, forced King Frederick William IV of Prussia to grant a liberal constitution. Similar constitutions were wrested from the rulers of the other states, and most Germans, for the first time, had parliaments, responsible government, freedom of the Press, freedom from arbitrary arrest, and trial by jury. Liberalism, it seemed, had triumphed everywhere.

The Frankfurt Parliament

The nationalists then began the task of achieving a united Germany. A general assembly, elected by popular vote, with one representative for every 50,000 of the population, met at Frankfurt to prepare a national constitution. Karl Marx condemned it as "an assembly of old women", for, after detailing the liberties that all Germans were to enjoy, it wasted time on tedious, involved debates about the nature of the proposed German federation. Would there be a *great Germany*, which would include Austria, or a *little Germany*, with Austria and its large non-Germanic population excluded?

This question had not been resolved when a counter-revolution occurred in Germany. Then, as a desperate measure, the Frankfurt Parliament offered the Crown of a united Germany to Frederick William IV. Having regained control in Prussia, and being a thorough conservative, he scornfully rejected it as "a crown of shame tendered from the gutter". He would have accepted a crown offered by the German princes, but he had no intention of becoming a constitutional monarch dependent on "the will of the people" for his authority.

The counter-revolution. Frederick William IV initiated a counter-revolution as soon as he had determined that he could rely on the support of the army and

the Prussian landowners. He abrogated the liberal constitution he had granted, and appointed conservative ministers. The other German princes, with the help of Prussian troops where necessary, followed Frederick William's lead and suppressed the constitutions they had given to their subjects at the height of the revolution.

The Frankfurt Parliament, rebuffed by Frederick William IV and opposed by Austria, was now in a hopeless position. Some of its members were ordered home by the governments of their states, and the rump, which had moved to Stuttgart, was dispersed by the King of Württemberg in June, 1849. Several belated but desperate attempts, especially in Baden and Saxony, to set up a German republic by force were savagely suppressed by Prussian troops.

Thus all the liberal revolts and the national movement in Germany had come to nought. In 1850, meeting at Olmütz, the German princes voted for a restoration of the Germanic Confederation under Austrian presidency. This return to the status quo of 1848 was a humiliating check to Frederick William IV's imperial ambitions. Austria's hopes of eventual German leadership also suffered a severe reverse when she failed to gain admission to the *Zollverein*.

The Austrian Empire

Vienna, the centre of reaction, was one of the first scenes of revolution after the "February Revolution" in Paris. Mobs set fire to Metternich's palace and forced the aging chancellor to flee the capital. Emperor Ferdinand I (1835-48) was compelled to grant a constitution which introduced parliamentary government and universal male suffrage.

The early success of the democratic movement in Vienna sparked off national movements in Bohemia and in Hungary, where the Magyars established an independent republic with Louis Kossuth as president.

But both the fall of the absolute Hapsburg monarchy and the dissolution of the Austrian Empire were prevented by the loyalty of the Austrian army and the Austrian landowners. After defeating the Czech rebels in Bohemia, Prince von Windischgrätz marched on Vienna and forced it to surrender. Ferdinand I was restored to his absolute position, but rather than break his oath to maintain the new Austrian constitution, he abdicated in favour of his nephew, Francis Joseph I (1848-1916), who immediately revoked the liberties the Austrian people had gained.

The Hungarian revolt proved more difficult to suppress. The Magyars, under Kossuth, resisted so stubbornly that Francis Joseph, despite help from the Croats in the south, had to call on Russia for assistance. This assistance was willingly given by Nicholas I, who feared that a successful independence movement in Hungary would inspire a bid for independence by his Polish subjects. Together the Austro-Russian armies overwhelmed the Magyars, and Hungary became a subject state of Austria. Meanwhile, as we already know, a national revolt in Lombardy had been crushed, though Charles Albert, king of Piedmont-Sardinia, supported it with all the power he could muster.

All the national movements within the Austrian Empire ended in disaster because the hatreds existing between the various nationalities prevented them from co-operating, and in some cases even led one minority into the error of helping Austria to suppress another minority. Thus, for example, the Croats,

who hated the Magyars more than they feared the Austrians, helped Austria to overthrow the Hungarian republic; and, ironically, at the end of the national revolts, Croatia was made a subject state, thus receiving as a reward the same treatment as that meted out to the Magyars as a punishment.

Features of the revolutions

The widespread revolutions of 1848 had these common features:

- They were revolts against Metternichism, a word we use to denote the attempt to maintain the status quo after 1815;
- Essentially they were liberal or national movements, though democrats and socialists played an active part in some uprisings, e.g., the "February Revolution" in France;
- Revolutionary impulses had been strengthened by industrialism, which produced a new middle class (advocating political liberalism) and an urban wage-earning class (which turned to political democracy or to socialism);
- In every country affected by Revolution the opening of railways in the 1840s had stimulated national feeling;
- During the period immediately preceding uprisings, poor harvests and economic crises had caused hardship and bitter discontent among the masses;
- The upheavals originated in cities and large towns because the liberals were concentrated in them, and so were the industrial workers, who had become acutely aware not only of the appalling living conditions in urban areas, but also of the atrocious working conditions forced upon them by industrialism.

Failure of the revolutions. Although there were no fewer than fifteen separate revolts, and for a brief period most European thrones were vacant, not a single revolution attained permanent success:

- The Second French Republic was overthrown in 1852;
- By the end of 1849 absolute government had been re-established in all the Italian states, except Piedmont-Sardinia, where the king, of his own free will, had granted a constitution;
- The status quo was virtually restored in the German states, and, with the suppression of the Frankfurt Assembly, the German nationalist movement came to nought;
- In the Austrian Empire the Hapsburg emperor regained his former standing, the revolutionary leaders were severely punished, and all the minority races were again subjugated to Austria.

Reasons for the failure. Numerous reasons may be advanced to explain the failure of the 1848 movements, but three stand out in importance:

- The Metternich concept, though its days were numbered, was still strong enough to turn back the waves of revolution. Prussian troops in Germany, Russian and Austrian troops in Hungary, and French and Austrian troops in Italy crushed the revolutionaries.
- The revolutionary movements were unable to match the strength of the reactionary and conservative forces, because, since the Economic

Revolution was only in its initial stages in Europe, the new capitalists did not have the wealth, and the industrial working class lacked the numbers, necessary to effect a successful revolution.

- The third, and perhaps the most important, cause of failure was social. When revolutionary violence was at its height, as during the "terrible June Days" in Paris or during the Chartist riots in British cities, the middle classes, terrified by the threat to their property, were ready to join forces with the old order to subdue anarchical mobs.

Gains made by the revolutionary movements. Though their major hopes were frustrated, the liberal and nationalist movements of 1848 did make important gains:

- Metternich fled from the European scene, and, without its arch-conspirator, the Metternich System soon collapsed. The *Concert of Europe* disappeared in 1854 when British and France went to war against Russia. By this time, too, France and Prussia were contemplating attacks on Austria.
- The failures in Italy convinced Cavour, the Piedmont patriot, (a) that the Italian nationalist movement had progressed beyond the intellectual and idealistic stage, and (b) that Italian unification could not be achieved without foreign aid. He adopted the practical policy which achieved Italian unity.
- After 1848 almost every German state had some form of parliament, and, however restricted its powers and the electorate it represented, the hopes of German liberals and democrats were lifted.
- The Frankfurt Assembly demonstrated the widespread nature of German nationalism; and, perceiving the failure of democratic methods, the Prussian king and Count Bismarck, his chief adviser, decided that German unification would not be achieved by a popular movement, but by Prussian power.
- Feudalism was abolished in the Austrian realms.
- The "March Laws", passed by the Diet at the height of the Hungarian uprising, inspired the Magyars in their fight for self-government, which ended successfully with the *Ausgleich* of 1867.

Document

Anonymous Republican Poster in Berlin during the First Days in March, 1848.

France is a republic.
The hour had struck for us, too!

Germans,

Our brothers in France have bravely led the way. They have shaken off their yoke and have raised a splendid altar to the Liberty they have so long desired.

This same France, which has twice overthrown her tyrants, has twice terrified the princes of Europe and awakened the peoples from their slumber to a new life, this same France has now risen a third time . . .

All the peoples have one burden, one grief, one pain—they have one hope,