UNIT 6 EUROPEAN POLITICAL MOBILIZATIONS

Structure

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6.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you will be able to understand :

- the logic behind the formation of the Congress system and what happened thereafter,
- the developments leading to the secret society movements and the revolutionary uprisings in the 1820s and the 1830s,
- the emergence of nationalist movements in various parts of Europe, and
- the background of the revolutions of 1848 and its consequences.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In the name of stability and peace the great powers of Europe-Austria, Russia, Prussia and England, were engaged in redrawing the political map of Europe after the fall of Napoleon I. Through a system of alliances which came to be known as the 'Concert of Europe' the great powers agreed to consult each other in order to maintain the peace of Europe. Attempt was made to restore the old monarchical order in Europe. However, nationalism and liberalism had already emerged as powerful forces in the 19th century Europe. This resulted in revolutionary movements challenging the authority of the monarchical rule. The period between 1815 and 1848 witnessed a number of such revolutionary movements in Europe. With the revolutions major treaties were overturned, conservative solidarity was eroded. This Unit first introduces you to the system of alliances and its consequences. Then it takes into account the secret society movements and the revolutions of the 1820s and the 1830s. Finally we have discussed emergence of the nationalist movements and the revolution of 1848.

6.2 THE CONGRESS SYSTEM AND ITS FALLOUT

In 1815, at the Congress of Vienna, the protagonists of the old European order, inspired by the Austrian Chancellor, Count Metternich, tried to create a permanent barrier against national and liberal movements. Popularly known as the Metternich system, the origins of this system of alliances can be traced from the Holy Alliance, brought together by Tsar Alexander I, and its rival, the Quadruple Alliance, which was a British creation to counteract the Tsar. These two different systems of alliances set the stage for what came to be known as the Congress system, which in the period after 1815, envisaged a series of international congresses of the great powers to decide on European issues and problems.

After 1818, following the Congress of Aix-la-Chappelle, there was a growing inclination towards great power intervention in the domestic politics of a country threatened by liberal movements. At the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle, French territory was evacuated and

France gained readmission to the Concert of Europe. This was looked upon as a success of English diplomacy and was much to the annoyance of Tsarist Russia. Interventionism emerged as one of the contentious issues at Aix-la-Chapelle. At the Congress, English diplomacy prevented European intervention in Spain, which was disturbed by liberal movements. But in 1820, when a similar outbreak occurred in Naples, the Powers conceded to Metternich's demand for intervention. He obtained recognition of the need for a military expedition to restore order threatened by liberal opposition. Subsequently at the Congress of Troppau (1820), this principle of European intervention came to be formally endorsed. At the Congress of Laibach, 1821, Metternich was allowed to intervene in Naples and Piedmont to restore the absolutist regimes. This was the greatest triumph of the Metternich system.

Undoubtedly, the Concert of Europe was a formidable combination of the great powers. Yet the triumph of the old order was more apparent than real. However much the makers of the post-Napoleonic settlement sought to restore the pre-revolutionary European order, what eventually emerged was a combination of the old and the new. Some of the crucial institutions that the Napoleonic Empire had created in France or elsewhere in Europe could not be altogether removed. Even though the landed aristocracy and the Church felt rejuvenated by the Restoration of the traditional dynasties, it was still impossible for the restored monarchies to ignore popular sentiments. The dynasties became conscious of the need to cultivate in some form popular political support. All this was an inevitable consequence of the failure of the peace makers of 1815 to find adequate means, within the restored monarchies, to prevent the contamination of their subjects by liberalism, nationalism and radical political ideologies. The pressure against the measures that were taken soon became so inexorable that they began to crumble within a few years after the Restoration, facing the early stirrings of liberal and national movements within these states, as well as in many parts of south-western and south-eastern Europe. For these movements the ideas that the French Revolution had already unleashed remained acutely relevant. In fact, these ideas were reenacted during the three successive stages of revolutionary upheavals between 1815 and 1848 that sought to undo the Restoration. In each of these stages there were three different strands of the revolutionary experience to which activists would hark back during that stormy period which eventually dismantled the Restoration of 1815. These "strands" were moderate constitutionalism, that would accept a monarchy in a popular guise, radical republicanism which verged on democracy, and an inchoate egalitarianism that anticipated socialist ideas of the future.

Between 1815 and 1848, the character of the opposition to the restored regimes, however, underwent a significant transformation. What in the 1820's, looked like an elitist, somewhat conspiratorial opposition without any roots in a larger society became linked by 1848, with a range of popular political movements. In the process, however, the opposition also became divided. The lineaments of their divergent ideas were, of course noticed even at an earlier period. The main elements in the opposition were the liberals who were tolerant about monarchy but were keen to see absolutism reformed into a constitutional monarchy. A classic representative figure of such liberalism in France was Francois Guizot, who was involved in successive French governments under the Orleanist monarchy of Louis Philippe. But there were also left wing liberals who were implacable adversaries of not just the nobles and the church but the institution of monarchy itself. Against the ultra royalists, who were slowly returning to power, this radical left wing tendency in the opposition fell back on the memory of the revolution. For them, representative government was not enough; it had to be wedded to republicanism. Men like Benjamin Constant for instance, wrote about the spectre of an aristocratic reaction. Besides the radicals, there was a small group of socialists in France. Saint-Simon had been able to gather around him a fairly sizeable group of followers who were not only critical of the restored regimes but were equally resentful of bourgeois individualism. Theirs was a vision of an egalitarian republic where a rational society could be built by removing inequalities. Such resentment about the Restoration, which was most virulent in France but no less strong elsewhere in Europe, came to be reinforced by popular unrest arising from periodic bouts of economic crisis in the course of the trade cycle. Even though the elitist constitutionalists were always suspicious about the masses, the latter could no longer be ignored as the struggle against the Restoration was undertaken in right earnest.

In the immediate aftermath of 1815, the main theatre of anti-Restoration politics was Spain, where between 1815 and 1820 a powerful movement was constituted against the

factories and a socialist order more generally which would rest on the collective ideals of equality rather than economic competition between individuals.

The upper classes, however, were determined to thwart all such demands in order to extract a heavy price from labour for the rapid development of capital in the initial phase of industrialisation. There were radical movements led jointly by artisans and some middle class activists at the turn of the nineteenth century. The British state adopted repressive measures against them which culminated in the Peterloo massacre of 1819.

During the same period, an independent working class movement with its own cooperatives, friendly societies, newspapers and stores as well as striking unions was also coming into being. It was distinct from the earlier radical tradition by virtue of its own proletarian leadership, an independent agenda of economic demands and more sustained organisation.

The first attempts to link all labouring men together in general trade union and also to forge unity for a General Strike aquired momentum during the 1820s and 30s. In 1834, the Grand National Confederation of Trade Unions or the GNCTU was formed to give concrete shape to a broad working class movement to demand better wages and working conditions including a ten hour working day. Some of the members also looked forward to an Owenite millenium in which workers would enjoy the full product of their labour by organising industries under their own cooperatives. Owen's own ideas also changed over time. After his return from the New World in 1829, he was accepted as a major spokesman of the budding trade union movement in Britain. However, differences soon cropped up between him and the younger generation of leaders as we shall note below.

At the same time, the state also swung into action and widespread arrests were ordered against all unions. In Dorsetshire, for example, the Friendly Society of Agricultural Workers was disbanded and six of its organisers convicted for seven years transportation simply on the ground of `taking secret oaths'. These became famous as the Tolpuddle martyrs and only after a prolonged agitation by workers they were repatriated in 1839.

Meanwhile economic depression had set in leading to further lowering of wages and large scale unemployment. As there was little provision for social security from the employers or the state, the workers were badly hit all over Britain. Even the governing classes were now forced to admit that industrial Britain was beginning to look like `two nations', divided between the rich and the poor inhabiting two different worlds between which there was little intercourse, similarity or sympathy.

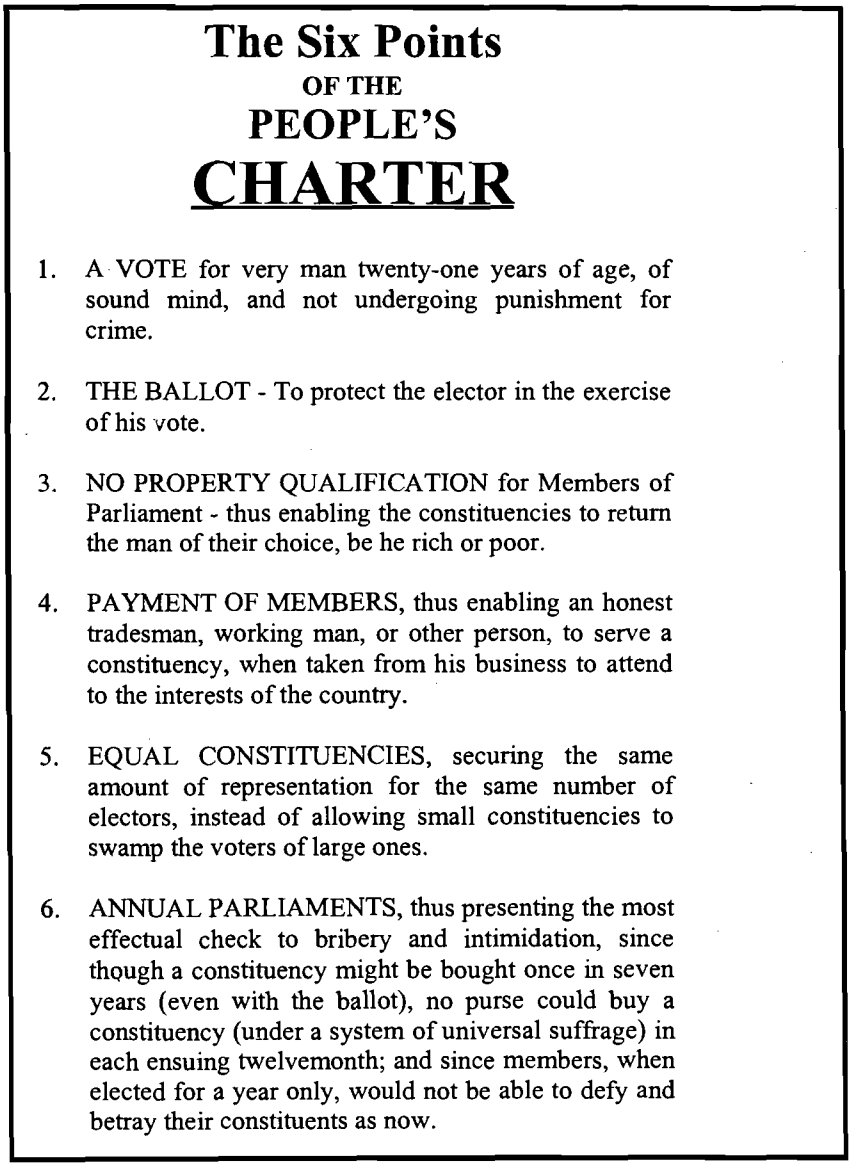
While the rulers thus debated the `Condition of England' question in the disturbed thirties, some working class leaders were beginning to question the Owenite stress on self help and cooperatives and demanding political rights for workers instead. In 1836, the London Working Men's Association was founded by men like Lovett to demand universal suffrage. Radicals like William Morris and Smith O' Brien also called for a new awakening amongst workers for building a society in which they would be `at the top of society instead of the bottom or, one in which there would be no top or bottom'.

2.10 CHARTIST MOVEMENT

The Chartist Movement was the most significant outcome of the growing focus on political power which the British workers evinced in 1830s and 40s. It derives its name from the six point Charter it presented before the parliament demanding universal manhood suffrage, secret ballot, annual parliaments, equal electoral districts, abolition of property qualification for the members of House of Commons and payment of regular salaries to them. In 1839, the first Chartist Convention met in London but despite the collection of a million signatures for its petition it was rejected outright by the parliament.

Such a rebuff shook the faith of a number of Chartists in the method of petition and some like Feargus O' Connor and Smith O' Brien now wanted to spread the agitation to the countryside or to call for a general strike and also use force if necessary. In November 1839, thousands of Welsh colliers led an armed march on the town of Newport. However, unity could not be sustained on these radical options and though another Chartist petition was presented to the parliament in 1842 yet, the economic recovery of the mid forties again turned the attention of most workers away from radical politics and towards wage improvements through trade union activity.

The last flicker of Chartism glew again in 1848--which was the year of revolutions all over Europe. A demonstration of five lakh Chartists was called at Kennington Commons in the heart of London to present a mammoth petition of six million signatures to the parliament. But poor organisation, combined with untimely rain, helped the government in diffusing the crisis and finally rejecting the demands of the Chartists. The economic prosperity of the ensuing period further turned the attention of British workers from political demands to economic self help of which the growth of the Rochdale store, founded in 1844, was an important symbol. The indifferent response to Karl Marx's efforts to lead the International Working Men's Association from London was another.



The Six Points
OF THE
PEOPLE'S
CHARTER

1. A VOTE for very man twenty-one years of age, of sound mind, and not undergoing punishment for crime.
2. THE BALLOT - To protect the elector in the exercise of his vote.
3. NO PROPERTY QUALIFICATION for Members of Parliament - thus enabling the constituencies to return the man of their choice, be he rich or poor.
4. PAYMENT OF MEMBERS, thus enabling an honest tradesman, working man, or other person, to serve a constituency, when taken from his business to attend to the interests of the country.
5. EQUAL CONSTITUENCIES, securing the same amount of representation for the same number of electors, instead of allowing small constituencies to swamp the voters of large ones.
6. ANNUAL PARLIAMENTS, thus presenting the most effectual check to bribery and intimidation, since though a constituency might be bought once in seven years (even with the ballot), no purse could buy a constituency (under a system of universal suffrage) in each ensuing twelvemonth; and since members, when elected for a year only, would not be able to defy and betray their constituents as now.

Fig: Charter

As a matter of fact, Marx and his famous associate--Frederich Engels-- published the Communist Manifesto at the first convention of the IWMA in London in 1848. It imparted scientific basis to socialist thinking and gave a call to workers of the world to unite in the struggle for a new egalitarian society which would transcend the exploitative capitalist order. The Manifesto also upheld the vision of a classless society based on the abolition of private property.

You will learn more about the historic struggles which this revolutionary manifesto inspired amongst the workers in several countries of the world. In the context of Britain, however, it is important to remember that liberal rather than revolutionary politics remained the preponderant concern of workers there. The growth of the Labour Party committed to parliamentary politics at the turn of the present century further ensured this pattern.

One major factor which led the working class of `the first industrial nation' towards such politics was the rise of the `labour aristocracy' there. These were men whose specialised skills in the expanding industrial economy coupled with the growing benefits of Britain's large empire enabled them to maintain a comfortable standard of living. As a result, the `labour aristocracy' put faith in `improvement' within the Capitalist order rather than its overthrow. They also aspired for voting rights on the same grounds that appealed to the middle classes i.e. as a `respectable' class playing its due role in preserving the Constitution. These skilled workers of Victorian Britain, moreover, emphasised self help and developed their own friendly societies and cooperatives as well as `New Unions' to improve their conditions and abjured the path of revolution.

Such an attitude also resulted in the formation of the Reform League in 1865 by the labour aristocracy jointly with middle class leaders to demand further parliamentary reforms. Its efforts bore fruit two years later when the urban workers finally got their voting rights. It is important to remember, however, that the Reform Act of 1867 which granted this right was a product not of a radical mass movement but of party politics in which the Conservatives led by Disraeli took the lead to outmanouvre Gladstonian Liberals in the mobilisation of votes. Such politics was indeed becoming the mainstay of the evolving capitalist order in general.

During the decade or so, following the passage of the Second Reform Act, the urban working class was thus accommodated within the liberal polity with further enactments to recognise their right to form trade unions (1871), to go on strikes (1876) and some steps towards educational and health reforms (1870 & 1875) respectively. None of these measures, however, mitigated the growing inequalities in the economy as the sanctity of private or even inherited property was never brought under question. Even democracy and welfare were still a distant dream for the lower classes in Britain. And fresh bouts of agitation would be necessary in the present century before the liberal polity would really fulfil these fundamental aspirations of workers and of the `second sex'.

While these developments were still in the future, a crucial benchmark had, however, been crossed by mid-nineteenth century in Britain with the largely peaceful resolution of the class question thrown up by the Chartist movement. The acceptance of parliament and electoral politics as the central mechanism for the resolution of such conflicts was significant in shaping this compromise.

The principal factors which led to such a political resolution in the first industrial nation were: the unity displayed by its upper classes *vis-a-vis* workers, the economic benefits of the expanding British Empire, the relative weakness of revolutionary politics in nineteenth century Britain and the subsequent growth of welfare legislation in the country.

However, several other institutional changes besides the extension of franchise had to be introduced in the Constituion of Britain in order to effect this transition on a sustained basis. In what ways this was achieved and what shape the British state finally acquired in the process would be the subject of our next enquiry.

Check Your Progress 4

1) Discuss the major grievances of the working class in 10 sentences.

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2) Write a brief note on the Chartist Movement.

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2.11 LET US SUM UP

In the 1750s, Britian's political, social and economic life was dominated by the landed aristocracy and agriculture was the basis of the economy. Government had little active role in the lives of the people. But by the 1760s Britain became the first nation which brought about significant changes in her polity, society and economy, thus beginning the process of industrialisation. We have discussed in this Unit, how new shades of political ideologies developed in Britain and how Britain became modern through a liberal and democratic transformation. We have also explained how Britain's rising middle class and ruling aristocracy through reforms managed to restrict the working class movements within the broader framework of parliamentary politics.

2.12 KEY WORDS

Industrial Capitalism : Industrial capitalism is that phase of capitalism which was marked by generation of new wealth, a new class of big industries, greater mechanisation,, search for new markets.

Oligarchy : A form of government in which a small group of people hold all the power.

Patriarchy : Society or country governed by men.

Proletarian Rebellion : Rebellion by workers who earn their living by working for wages.

Universal franchise : Right to vote by all members without any pre-qualification.

Chronological Tables

Domestic Politics:

1760	Accession of George III.
1763	North Briton Controversy (Wilkes Case)
1768	Middlesex election (Wilkes Case)
1769	Society for the Defence of the Bill of Rights
1770-82	Ministry of Lord North
1780	Dunning's Motion; Society for Constitutional Information; Gordon Riots;
1783	Fox-North Coalition;
1785	Parliamentry Reform Bill introduced
1788	Regency Crisis
1791	Abolition of Slavery Bill
1794	Habeas Corpus suspended
1795	Seditious Meetings Act

were organized to support this demand for extension of franchise. In 1848 the French radical Alexandre Ledru-Rolland went a step further by speaking in favour of universal manhood suffrage indicating that constitutional reform as a central issue in political discussion was slowly giving way to an acute sensitivity to democratization. The nationalist mobilization in central and Eastern Europe did not escape the impact of this emerging democratic ideology articulated in different kinds of radical politics.

Moving east and south towards Italy and Germany we find the developments of a sense of common destiny appropriate to a nationalist movement. Political loyalties still could be molded by dynasticism, regionalism and confessionalism, especially in the rural areas; yet, the nation emerged as a powerful competitor. Thinkers began to visualize the emergence of an integrated nation-state in the existing situation of political division. Many Germans and Italians regretted the fact that their lands were divided into so many smaller units. Here, as elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe such sentiments began to mould liberal politics. The Liberals everywhere were divided into Moderate and Radical factions. The Moderate Liberals in Germany were optimistic about the leadership of German princes in the movement for integration, relying substantially on Prussian initiatives. The Zollverein which had been established by Prussia in 1834 ostensibly for breaking economic and commercial barriers within Germany convinced the Liberals of the feasibility of a Prusso-centric plan of integration, even though, until Prussian dynastic interest suited it, the Prussian monarchy had no interest in such a plan. Some of their friends, however, had entertained sim .ar hopes for Austria. But since Austria's primary concern was to maintain a multi-national empire this strategy was not likely to yield any results.

Italian liberals lacked a correspon.ing state in which to place their hopes, excepting perhaps the Piedmontese monarchy, which had traditional dynastic rivalries with the Austrian Hapsburgs. But in reality Piedmont in comparison to Prussia was a small and relatively powerless kingdom. The result was that some Italian intellectuals even proposed the creation of an Italian federation under Papal leadership only to be frustrated by the persistent refusal of the Pope to respond to these overtures.

Radicals in Germany and Italy, however, had a different idea of how to bring about national unity. They saw the monarchical governments as obstacles to the politics of integration; to them, their overthrow was the precondition for a unified nation-state. Radical nationalism in Italy found its greatest exponent in Guiseppe Mazzini (1805-1872) who had earlier joined a branch of the Carbonari in 1827 but soon became disillusioned by their lack of clear purpose. He felt that Italy's freedom from Austrian domination depended entirely on the destruction of aristocratic privilege and clerical authority. With this objective he founded the Young Italy (Giovine Italia) in 1832 and envisioned a republican form of government for a united Italian state. After a failed armed uprising at Savoy in 1834 Mazzini went into exile in London. Political strife in Italy, however, was recurrent through the late 1830s and 1840s, although the movement still was narrowly based without the active involvement of the masses. The events of 1848 would change this situation and open new prospects for nationalist upsurge in other parts of central and southern Europe as well.

This was also the period when smaller, mostly Slavic nationalities, of the Austrian empire in the eastern reaches of the continent - the Czechs, Slovaks, Croats, Slavs, Ukrainians and Romanians – began to assert their identities as nations by reviving their historical and folk traditions. The literary societies in these regions, although representing a small intellectual elite, started disseminating nationalist sentiments often running against the barrier of traditionalism among the large majority of peasant population. In this regard the Poles and the Hungarians were a little more fortunate. In Poland and Hungary representative institutions like the provincial Diets provided the institutional focus of nationalist mobilization. In Poland and Hungary the craving for a nation-state was dovetailed with an elaborate program of democratization, abolition of feudalism, and imposition of central control over peripheral regions and local governments. But in either case this movement was stonewalled by peasant indifference and opposition of smaller nationalities living in the Hungarian part of the empire that did not like the prospect of political and cultural domination of the Magyars.

Check Your Progress 2

1) Write a note on the Greek Revolt. Answer in 10 sentences.

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2) Write about the July Revolution in France in five sentences.

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3) Briefly explain the emergence of nationalist movements in Italy and Germany. Answer in 100 words.

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6.6 REVOLUTIONS OF 1848

In 1848 Europe made its cautious entry into 'the age of the masses'. Political mobilizations – whatever be their nature – began to acquire a popular following in an attempt to overcome the limitations of the politics of secret societies that had dominated the different phases of political unrest earlier in the century. Economic distress certainly contributed to this process of mobilization. Speaking in general terms, poverty increased in most parts of the continent from the 1830s. In part it was an inescapable consequence of a more serious problem of transition from a predominantly subsistence economy dominated by agriculture to a market economy tuned with some form of industrial capitalism. Very often the peasants looked upon the market-oriented agriculture as pernicious complaining frequently about oppression by middlemen traders. The urban artisans failing in competition with cheaper factory products viewed the new large-scale industries as threats to their existence. Between the two revolutions the artisans and craftsmen in weaving, construction and printing trades participated in intermittent strikes and demonstrations; and later played a critical role in the revolutionary upheavals in the urban areas in 1848.

Against this backdrop of endemic social strife, the years between 1845 and 1847 were particularly difficult due to a run of poor harvest and an economic recession. In 1845 the potato blight caused acute food shortages, followed in 1846 by worse grain crop in a severely hot summer. The consequent steep rise in the prices of foodstuffs resulted in food riots in many places. Such distress was aggravated by economic recession, which produced urban unemployment.

Indeed, the economic crisis adding to popular resentment about a fall in the living standards fed into political unrest. Yet, an equally, important ingredient in revolutionary politics was the sharper political consciousness of Europeans who in the mid 19th century were somewhat better educated than in earlier times. Some people actually wrote about 'an educational boom' around the middle of the century; and many contemporaries did not

fail to see a connection between the rising level of literacy and a rebellious spirit. Giuseppe Mazzetti, an Italian educationist, in a tract on educational reforms even called for a system that would prevent "the movement of the masses, restrict the number of the literate, make them good and tranquil, which would exclude them from any instruction making them useless and harmful". To a proposed expansion of public education in the countryside an Austrian aristocrat replied: "Shall we found schools in the country, so that peasants can direct complaints against us to government officials?"

It seems that the revolution of 1848 was a multi-dimensional event if we take the varieties of the revolutionary experience in Europe into consideration. The European revolts in 1848 began with the Swiss Civil War in which the radically inclined Protestant cantons were locked in a battle with the conservative Catholic cantons. This confrontation reached its peak in 1847 and initiated the first of a series of political confrontations historians generally group together under the heading the Revolution of 1848. In this battle the radical Protestant Cantons were ultimately victorious as Metternich's attempt to bail out the conservative Catholic Cantons failed. The events in Switzerland clearly demonstrated that the defenders of the established order were incapable of stopping the tide of the revolution.

The revolutionary events began in January 1848 in Sicily where a group of conspirators planned an uprising in the provincial capital of Palermo. In the conditions of 1848 the uprising had a more explosive impact, quickly spreading to the southern Italian mainland. Naples, the capital city of the kingdom of The Two Sicilies witnessed street fighting before the king yielded to the revolution by promulgating a liberal constitution. Events in Piedmont and Tuscany in February 1848 followed the same pattern. Later in March the news of the fall of Metternich provoked Northern Italy to try to shake off Austrian domination.

The next decisive stage in the chain of uprisings took place in Paris where the banquet campaign begun in mid-1847 gave way to street demonstrations. Barricades were built, and soldiers deployed to crush the rebellion joined them, forcing King Louis Philippe to abdicate and flee the country. On the 24th February 1848 a Republic was proclaimed in response to such demands by the revolutionary crowd. In March the contagion spread to southern and western Germany. In the same month a rising took place in Munich followed by similar events in Vienna, Cracow, Milan and Berlin, repeating the familiar confrontation between insurgents and armed forces on the two sides of the barricades.

Political changes came in their wake. The Prussian and Bavarian monarchies dismissed their conservative ministers and appointed Liberals in their place. Metternich, the great symbol of the old order, went into exile in London. Emperor Ferdinand reluctantly appointed liberal ministers in Vienna. The provisional governments in Venice and Milan proclaimed their independence from Austrian rule and expressed their desire to become a part of a united Italian state. The new government in the Hungarian capital asserted its autonomy within the empire.

In Germany, unlike Italy where Carlo Alberto, the Piedmontese ruler, had started a war of unification, taking advantage of the collapse of Austrian control. In Northern Italy the movement towards integration continued in a peaceful and parliamentary fashion. A group of parliamentary deputies from different German states representing the liberal and radical opposition assembled at Frankfurt on Maine at the end of March 1848. They issued an appeal for elections to a Constituent National Assembly, which was to write a constitution for a united German national state. They could evoke sympathy from the newly established regimes in the German states. The elections were subsequently held in May and the Frankfurt National Parliament started its deliberations, opposed, however, by the Czech nationalists who were suspicious of a prospective German domination of Central Europe. Further east in Hungary the Diet under the leadership of Kossuth carried out significant reforms by introducing civil liberties, abolishing serfdom and illegitimate taxation imposed by the Catholic clergy. This was followed by a decision to hold elections on the basis of a liberal franchise. Even though the property qualification was retained, the special privileges for the nobility were abolished. Consequently, an autonomous Hungarian national government was created within the framework of the empire that claimed independence from the control of the central Imperial bureaucracy in Vienna and pledged responsibility to the Hungarian legislature.

6.7 AFTERMATH OF THE REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENTS

Despite the revolutionary euphoria all over Europe, and a significant move towards parliamentary government, the revolution ultimately "stopped at the foot of the throne" In most parts of the continent, monarchical government remained in place with very little changes in even their administrative structure. Except in France, where republicanization made some headway, elsewhere important state functionaries of the old regime retained their positions. Even when authorities conceded the principle of parliamentary responsibility of the Crown's ministers, rulers were inclined to create parallel sources of power in their personal entourage. The revolutionary dream of setting up a citizen's army remained elusive. Franchise reform, which was certainly the most important achievement of the revolution of 1848, benefited more the conservative political groups in European society than the champions of political equality. The newly enfranchised rural people who had had no experience in dealing with elections continued to be swayed by their traditional loyalty to the land owning classes. Certainly the elections provided a much greater opportunity for political participation; they did not automatically contribute to the much-expected democratization of European societies. In France, elections to the Constituent assembly were held on a fairly broad franchise which had entitled adult males to vote but the end result of this trial run at democracy was a strange discrepancy between the advocates of democracy and its beneficiaries. Everywhere in Europe including France a large number of candidates with conservative views were elected with peasant support in the rural constituencies. The radicals who were the supporters of democracy and had always pressed for the broadest possible franchise were the big losers in elections held under the very same franchise they advocated.

From mid-1848, the revolution began to stage its retreat with a certain weakening of the liberals. The second half of 1848 was a period of the resurgence of the party of order. In a series of dramatic confrontations, the revolutionary forces were overwhelmed. Moderate factions within the liberal movement worked out compromises with conservatives and monarchists, and together played a crucial role in suppressing the second round of revolutionary insurgency in 1849. The turn of the tide was unstoppable. In Naples for instance, in response to the radical demands for greater parliamentary control over foreign policy in order that the Neapolitan troops could be deployed against the Austrians in northern Italy, King Ferdinand decided to retaliate with repression. In the street fighting that ensued, the Lazzaroni, the devoutly pro-monarchist casual labourers of Naples supported their rulers. In the month of June in Paris, the turn to the right was clearly visible. Earlier in April, some of the radicals had established national workshops modeled on the social workshops of the well-known socialist Louis Blanc. The amount of additional expenditure that the provisional government incurred in maintaining these workshops became a major issue in conservative propaganda against the republican left, when fiscal difficulties set in, provoking tax riots in some areas of rural France. . By the end of May, the provisional government decided to abolish them. This became a focus of an increasingly militant opposition in early June when the republic faced an insurrection from its supporters. The repression by the provisional government was severe. . Repressive measures, including the use of the artillery, was obviously directed against the lower classes and had the support of the richer sections of Parisian society, providing Karl Marx with a certain perspective about class struggles in France. The events of the June days in Paris were certainly a defeat for the left in France.

By August 1848, the situation in the Habsburg Empire, which had appeared hopeless few months earlier, began to improve. Most of northern Italy was reconquered. The Emperor and his Court were back in Vienna, discussing the future with a Constituent Assembly. Only the Hungarians remained defiant. This change in the position of the Austrian Monarchy was no less significant than the June days in Paris. Restoring the authority of the Monarchy involved a systematic suppression of the Revolution in the different parts of the Empire. In the province of Bohemia, the hostility between the German and Czech nationalists enabled Prince Alfred Windischgratz, the commander-in-chief of the Prague garrison, to impose martial law and to order the dissolution of the Prague National Committee In Southern Europe, the victories of the armies of General Radetsky in northern Italy were the most decisive military triumph responsible for the survival of the Empire. The way the Piedmontese monarchy hesitated in closing in on the Austrian forces was largely responsible for the ultimate defeat of the Italians. In the decisive battle of Custozza (July 1848), the Piedmontese army was routed, removing the barrier to the

capitulation of the Republican regimes that had been established in northern Italy. Milan fell at the beginning of August. A truce was concluded between Piedmont and Austria - which enabled Austria to retain its control over the region. In 1849, the same pattern was repeated following a revolutionary upsurge in the Papal States, when the Roman Republic was proclaimed by a group of radicals who were now trying to devise a new strategy for a mass movement for national unification. The Piedmontese monarchy was forced by the democrats to renew the war with Austria. In June 1849, the war between Austria and the Piedmontese army ended in a resounding defeat for the latter at the battle of Novaro. Carlos Alberto, the King of Piedmont, abdicated in favour of Victor Emmanuel, who, apparently, agreed to suppress democratic movements in his territories. The Pope, who had earlier fled Rome, and had taken refuge in Sicily, was reinstated under the protection of the army of the French President, Louis Napoleon Bonaparte.

The success in Italy encouraged the Austrians to impose their will on the Hungarian National Assembly, which, in any case, had already been sufficiently plagued by the irredentism of smaller nationalities, such as the Croats. It was within this context that Vienna planned to regain its control. The Hungarian government in Budapest was ordered to give up its plans for an independent Hungarian army. Austrian authorities also indirectly encouraged the Croat Ban, Count Jelacic, to take military action against the Hungarian government. As Jelacic's forces crossed the border between Croatia and Hungary, the Hungarian government faced war on three fronts. Magyar constitutionalists, who were still hoping for a link with the Austrian Empire were, now, decisively discredited by Austrian machinations. The radicals in Budapest demanded a revolutionary response to this situation, and appointed a National Defense Committee, led by Lajos Kossuth, the veteran leader of Hungarian opposition to Habsburg absolutism. The Hungarian government was never consulted. A few days later, the authorities in Vienna dissolved the Hungarian parliament and government, forcing the constitutionalist ministry to resign, and a confrontation with the National Defense Committee ensued. In the initial stages of the military conflict, the Hungarians were successful; but finally, with Russian support, the Hungarian nationalist resistance was suppressed.

In Germany, the liberal program of national unification had already run into rough weather. With the conquest of insurgent Vienna in August, and the November crisis in Prussia, the plan for a German national government was undermined. The Frankfort National Assembly, which had shown a degree of tolerance concerning Prussian absolutism, ceased to be of significance now. For the King of Prussia refused to lead it, leaving the pro-Prussian constitutional monarchists in the assembly no means for the creation of a German national state without Austria. The Prussian Constituent Assembly meanwhile had emerged as a threat to the Prussian King. The republicans were a minority, but the constitutional monarchists were a force to be reckoned with. It was important for the Prussian monarachy to deal with this opposition decisively; and the King did so in November 1848 through the repressive measures of the ultra-monarchist Prime Minister, Count Brandenburg. Brandenburg unilaterally proclaimed a constitution, while the Constituent Assembly continued its debates. In this way, the Prussian conservatives adjusted their traditional ideas to the altered political conditions of 1848. In any case, the authority of the monarchists ultimately triumphed over the revolutionary forces by establishing a new constitution in Prussia. The constitutionalist regimes in south-western Germany, however, survived, to provide inspiration for the liberal nationalists in the ensuing decades before Unification (1871).

In the story of the European Revolutions of 1848-49, the final defeat of the revolutionary forces took place in France. In December 1848, Louis Napoleon Bonaparte was elected as French President, enjoying enormous executive power, invested by the Constituent Assembly in the office of the President. Bonaparte's electoral success had much to do with witless support from the peasants, and expectant indulgence from monarchists. Very soon, the French bourgeoisie, which had by then become tired of revolutionary unrest, fell in line with Louis Napoleon's dictatorial pretensions. In the middle of 1849, the suppression of the last strands of radicalism sealed the fate of the Revolution, not just in France, but also elsewhere in Europe. The plebiscite which confirmed Louis Napoleon as President for Life, after his coup d'etat of 2 December 1851, was the appropriate end to this story of defeat.

Check Your Progress 3

1) Explain in five sentences the economic crisis behind the revolution of 1848.

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2) What was the impact of the revolution of 1848 on the Habsburg Empire ? Answer in 50 words.

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3) Was the revolution of 1848 successful in France ? Answer in five sentences.

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6.8 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit you have learnt about the development of the Congress system by the great powers. Their emphasis was on the restoration of the old order. Unfortunately for them, the ideas of liberalism and nationalism had already influenced the minds of the people. Secret society movements, revolutionary upsurges in different parts of Europe reflected the general attitude towards the restoration of the old order and the territorial settlements reached at 1815. The European revolts in 1848 despite focussing on parliamentary government failed to change much the character of monarchical government. Even in France the revolutionary forces failed to check the rise of Louis Napoleon's dictatorship.

6.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

1) To maintain balance of power, to preserve peace, to restore the monarchical regime, etc. See Sec.6.2.

2) Clash of interest among the great powers, influence of liberalism and nationalism, growing demand for constitutional monarchy, etc. See Sec.6.2.

3) See Sec.6.3

Check Your Progress 2

1) See Sec.6.4

2) See Sec.6.4

3) See Sec.6.5

Check Your Progress 3

1) Growing poverty, oppression by middlemen, resentment among artisans, craftsmen because of competition with cheaper factory products, etc. See Sec 6 6.

2) See Sec.6.7

3) See Sec.6.7