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Europe and the World, 1289-Present
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12 February 2014

Reflection Paper #1

The political stratosphere that dominated Europe in the 19th Century following Napoleon's reign was charged with conservative ideals, and anything representing liberalism or nationalism was harshly rejected. With the return of the Bourbon royals in France, the "restoration" of the king was reinstated to that of King Louis XVIII. While he ruled with conservative ideals, he did so with moderation, believing that, if he had a more relaxed rule than that of previous kings, he would be more likely to remain in control of the throne.

When King Louis XVIII died in 1824, King Charles X took his place on the French throne. His policies were much more conservative than that of Louis XVIII, holding favoritism to the ever-present Catholic Church. King Charles X gave money to the Church for the land that had been removed from them during the Revolution, as well as giving them more control over education. The people began to oppose his rule, for he did not hold the values of nationalism and liberalism that the Revolution had struggled for, and in return, King Charles X removed the Chamber of Deputies, restricted freedom of the press, and further restricted voting rights.

Meanwhile, in Germany, Austria and Prussia remained as the most politically influential states. Austria was overtaken with police, spies, and censorship and travel restrictions to dissuade any notions of liberalism and nationalism. Students and teachers at universities that began organizations that supported these ideals were soon disbanded, outlawed by the Carlsbad Decrees, which issued strict supervision of classrooms and libraries, in addition to the removal of all organizations that supported nationalism. Liberal students and teachers were terrorized, but the organizations no longer continued.

Prussian rulers had no sympathy for any of the liberal or national reforms that wished to take place, and they actually reversed many of the changes that occurred during the reign of Napoleon.

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Though they didn't support the national ideals, Prussia made treaties with smaller German Confederation states to allow for free-flow trade among them, which would ironically unify the nation.

Italy was still controlled heavily by Austria, and when the disposed aristocracy returned to take back their positions, movements were quickly squelched and most of the aristocrats were exiled or imprisoned. Over the course of the next 15 years or so, anything remotely liberal was convicted. Russia, ruled by Russian tsar, Alexander I, fell under the influence of Austrian ruler Metternich, and Russia was still heavily influenced by autocracy and conservatism when he died in 1825. His successor, Nicholas I, ruled much the same, destroying any hopes of liberalism or nationalism when the "Decembrists" revolted against the concepts of conservatism.

While most of Europe was heavily influenced by conservatism, Great Britain, still predominately conservative, showed signs of political flexibility in regard to public opinion. While many reforms were issued, such as reforms repealing labor laws that prohibited organizing unions that gave hope to liberals, it still did not allow for popular public opinion within the government. However, in the early 1830's, Britain abolished slavery in British colonies, and continued to sway to humanitarian reforms. This was a sure sign to the hopeful beginning of liberal and national ideas within Europe.

Liberalism and nationalism were the key ideals that the people of the majority of European countries strived for during the French Revolution, as well as through Napoleon's reign, and even long after his reign ended. With a select few leaders dominating Europe's political stratosphere, nationalism and liberalism would brutally fight for its chance to be the dominating political ideals over conservatism, many times repressed, only to emerge somewhere else within the region.