

Name: _____

Modern European History

Date: _____

Unit 6 –Nation-Building and War

Nationalism

Great Britain

Great Britain managed to avoid the revolutionary upheavals of the first half of the nineteenth century. In 1815 aristocratic landowning classes, which dominated both houses of Parliament, governed Great Britain. In 1832 Parliament passed a bill that increased the number of male voters. The new voters were chiefly members of the industrial middle class. By giving the industrial middle class an interest in ruling, Britain avoided the revolutions that occurred in so many other European nations in 1848. In the 1850s and 1860s, Parliament made social and political reforms that helped the country remain stable. Another reason for Britain's stability was its continuing economic growth. By 1850, industrialization had brought prosperity to the British middle class. After 1850, real wages of workers also rose significantly.

Queen Victoria, whose reign from 1837 to 1901 was the longest in English history, reflected perfectly the national pride of the British. Her sense of duty and moral respectability came to define the values and attitudes of her age, which was later called the Victorian Age.

Austria

The Austrian Empire was a multinational empire - a collection of different peoples including Germans, Czechs, Magyars (Hungarians), Slovaks, Romanians, Slovenes, Poles, Croats, Serbs, Ukrainians, and Italians. Only the German-speaking Hapsburg dynasty held the empire together. The Germans, though only a quarter of the population, played a leading role in governing the Austrian Empire.

In March 1848, demonstrations erupted in the major cities of the Austrian Empire against Metternich, the Austrian foreign minister. To calm the demonstrators, the Hapsburg court dismissed Metternich, who fled to England. In Vienna, revolutionary forces took control of the capital and demanded a liberal constitution. To appease the revolutionaries, the government gave Hungary its own legislature. In Bohemia, the Czechs clamored for their own government.

Austrian officials had made concessions to appease the revolutionaries but were determined to reestablish their control over the empire. In June 1848, Austrian military forces crushed the Czech rebels in Prague. By the end of October, the rebels in Vienna had been defeated as well. With the help of a Russian army of 140,000 men, the Hungarian revolutionaries were finally subdued in 1849. The revolutions in the Austrian Empire had failed.

After the Hapsburg rulers crushed the revolutions of 1848 and 1849, they restored centralized, autocratic government to the empire. Austria's defeat at the hands of the Prussians in 1866, however, forced the Austrians to make concessions to the fiercely nationalistic Hungarians. The result was the Compromise of 1867, which created the dual monarchy of Austria - Hungary. Each of these two components of the empire now had its own constitution, its own legislature, its own government bureaucracy, and its own capital (Vienna

for Austria and Budapest for Hungary). Holding the two states together were a single monarch - Francis Joseph was emperor of Austria and king of Hungary - and a common army, foreign policy, and system of finances.

Russia

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Russia was still rural, agricultural, and autocratic. The Russian czar was regarded as a divine-right monarch with unlimited power. In 1856, however, the Russians suffered a humiliating defeat in the Crimean War. Even conservatives realized that Russia was falling hopelessly behind the western European states. Czar Alexander II decided to make some reforms.

Serfdom was the largest problem in czarist Russia. On March 3, 1861, Alexander issued an emancipation edict, which freed the serfs. Peasants could now own property. The government provided land for the peasants by buying it from the landlords. The new land system, however, was not very helpful to the peasants. The landowners often kept the best lands for themselves. The Russian peasants had little good land to support themselves. Emancipation, then, led not to a free, landowning peasantry but to an unhappy, land-starved peasantry that followed old ways of farming.

Alexander II attempted other reforms as well, but he could please no one. Reformers wanted more changes, but conservatives thought that the czar was destroying Russia's basic institutions. When radicals assassinated Alexander II in 1881, his son, Alexander III, turned against reform and returned to the old methods of repression.

The Crimean War

The Ottoman Empire had long controlled most of the Balkans in southeastern Europe. Russia wanted to expand its power into the Balkans so that Russian ships could sail through the Dardanelles, the straits between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean Sea. If Russia could achieve this goal, it would become the major power in eastern Europe and challenge British naval control of the eastern Mediterranean.

In 1853 the Russians invaded the Turkish Balkan provinces of Moldavia and Walachia. In response, the Ottoman Turks declared war on Russia. Great Britain and France, fearful of Russian gains in this war, declared war on Russia the following year. This conflict came to be called the Crimean War. The Crimean War was poorly planned and poorly fought. Eventually, heavy losses caused the Russians to seek peace. By the Treaty of Paris, signed in March 1856, Russia agreed to allow Moldavia and Walachia to be placed under the protection of all the great powers.

The effect of the Crimean War was to destroy the Concert of Europe. Austria, with its own interests in the Balkans, had refused to support Russia in the Crimean War. Austria and Russia, the chief powers maintaining the status quo before the 1850s, were now enemies. A defeated and humiliated Russia withdrew from European affairs for the next 20 years. Austria was now without friends among the great powers.