1848 Revolutions In Europe Essay, Research Paper

During the period January 1848 to August 1849 there were many revolutions

across the face of Europe. They occurred in France, Italy , Piedmont, The Austrian Empire, Germany, Poland, Holland, Denmark and Switzerland. These events which occurred across Europe had many similarities both in their origins, nature and consequences but just as many differences. Many of these similarities lie in the fact that the leaders surrendered power easily and the type of government that was set-up.

Consequently historians disagree.

In France there was a general feeling of dislike for the King Louis-Phillipe the

XVIII. Phillipe s country badly needed much liberal social reform to keep the citizens happy. However, Phillipe was not prepared to give any ground in the direction of social reform. He ignored the principles behind parliamentary government and appointed first ministers who agreed with his decisions. He also manipulated elections, as well as, gave judiciary favours. Phillipe stubbornly resisted attempts to make government more representative and responsive. These actions caused discontent among the French. Banquets were organised by the middle classes to protest at the government’s intransigence. Phillipe quickly had them banned when they became too radical

In Rome the Pope, Pope Pius the IX was also unpopular. He had earned himself

the nickname of the liberal Pope as a result of his introduction of many liberal reforms. During 1833 – 1834 he freed political prisoners and allowed political exiles to return from abroad because of pressure from the people who s views were altered by nationalists and groups such as the Carbonari and the whole risorgimento’ movement. However, when things turned awkward because of pressure from nationalists and liberals like Giusseppe Mazzini, Balbo, Gioberti and Cataneo, he was only too quick to withdraw them. The people were left with a feeling of anger at their leader.

Economic crisis hit Europe in 1846 as a direct result of the sudden burst of

industrial development. The economic growth encouraged speculative investment

but the market became saturated and a crash ensued which left may investors losing money. This directly contributed to social and political unrest and discontent. The crisis was exacerbated by the failure of the harvest which caused bread prices to rocket and unemployment to increase. The Austrians, with their backwards economy needed the high tariffs to survive and so they gave their goods precedence over the Milanese people s goods, in this case being Tobacco. Consequently the Milanese rioted in January. In Italy the people looked likely to riot if something positive was not done about price of bread, which was a staple food. Events took a similar course in France. Riots occurred in Paris and Lyons and intellectuals began to write about the plight of the poor . People like Louis Blanc and Lamartine saw this opportunity and seized it. They did this by preaching their own more radical ideologies. Political attitudes amongst the peasants began to swing in the direction of more radical ideas. The radicals were interested in deposing the King and making France a republic.

Nationalism was rife throughout Europe at this time. The nationalists felt that the current leaders were not giving the people a fair deal and therefore they had to be replaced. There had always been a strong Nationalist movement in France, however it was mostly ignored by the peasants because it was seen as the domain of the middle classes. However, as times were hard the Nationalists made promises that they could alleviate France from this tragic situation it had got into. This caught the ears of the peasantry and made them listen. In Italy the causes were very much the same, however there was a strong felling of Italian unity which people like Mazzini, Giusseppe Garibaldi and Daniel Manin had done their best to evoke. Another difference was the repression which the Austrians forced upon the Milanese and the Venetians.

When demonstrations were held outside Phillipe s Palace the soldiers started

shooting the demonstrators. This whipped the people into even more of a frenzy than they were in already. Finally, on the 24th of February 1848 Louis-Phillipe the XVIII abdicated to England, in favour of his grandson. The Second Republic was then declared from the Hotel de Ville. In Southern Europe the Italians looked likely to revolt against their leader or oppressors respectively. When March the 18th, 1848 came the Milanese revolted against the Austrians, they were closely followed by the Venetians who, under Manin, did likewise on March the 22nd. In November, 1848 the Pope abdicated from Rome.

In Piedmont, the King Charles-Albert received a request for help from the

Milanese. The Milanese were fighting an all out war against the Austrians in

Lombardy. In March 1848 Charles-Albert declared war on Austria. The King was

keen to prove that he could also be liberal because he was worried that if the rebels succeeded that as a monarchy Savoy would be threatened by the surrounding

republican states. Charles-Albert granted a constitution to his people. The battles in which the Sardinians engaged the Austrians were virtually impossible to win because of the Austrian superiority of numbers and training of the soldiers. The Sardinians were defeated in July 1848; however, this was not the end of them. In March 1849 the Sardinians launched another offensive against the Austrians, however weakened by their previous losses they took large casualties during the battle of Novara and were forced to retreat, and exit from the scene of the European revolutions after the abdication of Charles-Albert. This left Austrian-Italy firmly in their hands.

In April the new French government agreed on a constitution and gave it to the

people. Workshops were set up to combat the problem of unemployment. In these

workshops the people learnt skills which they could use to help produce goods. On the 24th of June 1848 the government dissolved the national workshops this caused the lower classes to revolt. The government sent in the army. More than 3,000 people were killed in three days and thousands were sent into exile or prison. The revolts were squashed on the 26th. This was the infamous June Days . In December the elections were held and Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte won in excess of 70% of the voters. This firmly placed him in power as the President of France.

Whilst France fought viciously internally the Italians had a different war to fight. In Milan the Milanese fought openly with the Austrians. After their fruitless appeals for help from the Sardinians they were left to take on the might of the Austrians by themselves. They were crushed in July 1848. The pope instantly panicked and gave the papal citizens a constitution. Finally, the assassination of the Papal Prime Minister, Pelligrino Rossi, in November 1848; caused the Pope to abdicate from Rome to Genoa. The Roman Republic was set up in February 1849. The Austrians, with French help, quickly destroyed the Roman Republic in July and restored the Pope. In Venice a liberal lawyer, Daniel Manin, was freed during the rioting of March 1848. Manin s first step was to establish food surpluses and a civic guard. He set about preparing for elections, granted the people new freedoms and began to fortify Venice from assault. He appealed to the Swiss and the French for military aid and received soldiers. The Americans also sent ships through the Austrian blockades with

aid in the form of food. At the battle of Novara the Venetians were badly beaten and took many casualties which led to disease. Finally on August the 24th, 1849 the Venetians could go on no longer due to the rampant Cholera and starvation they were forced to accept unconditional surrender terms from the Austrians. Venice was the last republic to be crushed.

In France the monarchy was gone forever. Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte was the

leader. Napoleon had only one aim on his mind when he took power and that was to

re-establish the empire and become the ruler of France. Slowly, Napoleon eroded the republic taking it s very pillars upon which it was founded away to give him more power turning France into ever more of an autocratic state. Finally in 1851 Louis Napoleon succeeded in turning France into an Empire and making himself Emperor. Whilst Napoleon was firmly establishing himself as Emperor of France the Austrians restored their rule in Venice and Milan. Meanwhile in Rome the Pope was re-instated. The key difference between France and the Italies was that the French revolution succeeded, in a manner of speaking, whereas the old rulers were restored in Italy .

The revolutions all happened within the time period of January 1848 to August

1849. To this extent it can be granted that the revolutions had one definite similarity.

In conclusion, there were many similarities and many differences between the

revolutions. The main difference between France and Italy was that in Italy there was an external enemy however no real common cause. Whereas, in France they fought internally against a common enemy. On balance, perhaps if the leaders were not so arrogant and better prepared there may well have been the possibility of the revolutions succeeding and the maps of Europe being re-drawn.

1514.

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