The Rise of Nationalism in Europe

Frédéric Sorrieu vision of World

Frédéric Sorrieu, a French artist, in 1848 prepared a series of four prints visualising his dream of a world made up of democratic and Social Republics.

1. The first print shows the people of Europe and America marching in a long train and offering homage to the Statue of Liberty as they pass it. The torch of Enlightenment was carried by a female figure in one hand and the Charter of the Rights of Man in the other.
2. On the earth in the foreground lie the shattered remains of the symbols of absolutist institutions.
3. In Sorrieu's utopian vision, the people of the world are grouped as distinct nations, identified through their flags and national costume.
4. The procession was led by the United States and Switzerland, followed by France and Germany. Following the German people are the people of Austria, the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, Lombardy, Poland, England, Ireland, Hungary and Russia.
5. From the heavens above, Christ, saints and angels gaze upon the scene. They have been used by the artist to symbolise fraternity among the nations of the world.

During the nineteenth century, nationalism emerged as a force which brought huge changes in the political and mental world of Europe. The end result of these changes was the emergence of the nation-state.

The French Revolution and the Idea of the Nation

1. In 1789 Nationalism came with French Revolution and the political and constitutional changes led to the transfer of sovereignty from the monarchy to a body of French citizens. Various measures and practices were introduced such as the ideas of la patrie (the fatherland) and le citoyen (the citizen). A new French flag, the tricolour was chosen to replace the former one.
2. Democracy destroyed in France by Napoleon and the Civil Code of 1804 known as Napoleonic Code did away with all privileges based on birth, established equality before the law and secured the right to property.

The Making of Nationalism in Europe

Germany, Italy and Switzerland were divided into kingdoms, duchies and cantons whose rulers had their autonomous territories.

The Aristocracy and the New Middle Class

The Aristocracy was the dominant class on the continent politically and socially. The majority of the population was made up of the peasantry. Industrialisation began in England in the second half of the eighteenth century. New social groups came into being: a working-class population and middle classes made up of industrialists, businessmen, professionals.

What did Liberal Nationalism Stand for?

1. The term 'liberalism' derives from the Latin root liber, meaning free. The right to vote and to get elected was granted exclusively to property-owning men. Men without property and all women were excluded from political rights.
2. In 1834, a customs union or zollverein was formed at the initiative of Prussia and joined by most of the German states. The union abolished tariff barriers and reduced the number of currencies from over thirty to two.

A New Conservatism after 1815

- In 1815, European governments were driven by a spirit of conservatism. Conservatives believed in monarchy, the Church, social hierarchies, property and that the family should be preserved.
- A modern army, an efficient bureaucracy, a dynamic economy, the abolition of feudalism and serfdom could strengthen the autocratic monarchies of Europe.
- In 1815, representatives of the European powers – Britain, Russia, Prussia and Austria met in Vienna to draw up a settlement for Europe.
- The Bourbon dynasty was restored to power and France lost the territories it had annexed under Napoleon.
- The major issues taken up by the liberal-nationalists, who criticised the new conservative order, was freedom of the press.

The Revolutionaries

1. In 1815, secret societies were formed in many European states to train revolutionaries and spread their ideas. Revolutionary opposed monarchical forms, fight for liberty and freedom.
2. The Italian revolutionary Giuseppe Mazzini, born in Genoa in 1807, founded two more underground societies, first, Young Italy in Marseilles.
3. Secondly, he founded Young Europe in Berne, whose members were like-minded young men from Poland, France, Italy and the German states.

The Age of Revolutions: 1830-1848

In July 1830, Bourbon Kings were overthrown by liberal revolutionaries who installed a constitutional monarchy with Louis Philippe at its head. The July Revolution sparked an uprising in Brussels which led to Belgium breaking away from the United Kingdom of the Netherlands. In 1821, Greeks struggled for independence.

The Romantic Imagination and National Feeling

1. Culture played an important role in creating the idea of the nation: art and poetry, stories and music helped express and shape nationalist feelings.
2. Romanticism, a cultural movement which sought to develop a particular form of nationalist sentiment. Language also played an important role in developing nationalist sentiments.
3. Russian language was imposed everywhere and in 1831 an armed rebellion against Russian rule took place which was ultimately crushed.

Hunger, Hardship and Popular Revolt

Europe faced economic hardships in the 1830s. The first half of the nineteenth century saw an enormous increase in population all over Europe. The rise of food prices or a year of bad harvest led to widespread pauperism in town and country. In 1848, food shortages and widespread unemployment brought the population of Paris out on the roads.

The Revolution of the Liberals

In 1848, a revolution led by the educated middle classes was underway. Men and women of the liberal middle class demanded creation of a nation-state on parliamentary principles – a constitution, freedom of the press and freedom of association.

A large number of political associations came together in Frankfurt to vote for an all-German National Assembly. On 18 May 1848, 831 elected representatives marched to take their places in the Frankfurt parliament convened in the Church of St Paul.

The Constitution drafted for German nation was headed by a monarchy, subject to a Parliament. The Crown was offered to Friedrich Wilhelm IV, King of Prussia but he rejected it and joined other monarchs to oppose the elected assembly. The Middle Class dominated the Parliament and a large number of women participated in liberal movement.

Women formed their own political associations, founded newspapers and took part in

political meetings and demonstrations, but they were still denied suffrage rights during the election of the Assembly.
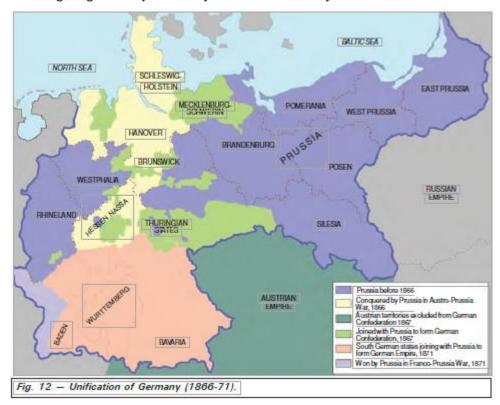
In the years after 1848, the autocratic monarchies of Central and Eastern Europe began to introduce the changes that had already taken place in Western Europe before 1815. Thus, serfdom and bonded labour were abolished both in the Habsburg dominions and in Russia.

The Making of Germany and Italy

Germany – Can the Army be the Architect of a Nation?

Nationalism in Europe moved away after 1848 and Germany and Italy came to be unified as nation-states. Prussia took over the leadership of the movement for national unification. The architect of this process was its chief minister, Otto von Bismarck, carried out with the help of the Prussian army and bureaucracy.

In January 1871, the Prussian King, William I, was proclaimed German Emperor. An assembly was held to proclaim the new German Empire. The process of nation-building demonstrated the dominance of Prussian state power. The currency, banking, legal and judicial system in Germany were modernised.

Fig. 12 — Unification of Germany (1866-71).

Italy Unified

Italy was divided into seven states, in the middle of the nineteenth century, and among all the seven states, Sardinia-Piedmont, was ruled by an Italian princely house. All the regions were dominated by different kings. In the 1830's Giuseppe Mazzini formed a secret society called Young Italy.

The movement was led by Chief Minister Cavour. In 1859, Sardinia-Piedmont defeated Austrian forces. In 1860, they marched into South Italy and the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies and succeeded in winning the support of the local peasants. In 1861 Victor Emmanuel II was proclaimed king of united Italy.

The Strange Case of Britain

Great Britain was the model of the nation and prior to the eighteenth century there was no British nation. The nation became powerful as it steadily grew in wealth, importance and power.

The Act of Union (1707) between England and Scotland resulted in the formation of the 'United Kingdom of Great Britain' meant, in effect, that England was able to impose its influence on Scotland. In 1801, Ireland was forcibly incorporated into the United Kingdom. The symbols of the new Britain – the British flag (Union Jack), the national anthem (God Save Our Noble King), the English language – were actively promoted.

Visualising the Nation

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries artists represented a country as a person and nations as female figures. During the French Revolution, female figures portray ideas such as Liberty, Justice and the Republic. Liberty is represented as a red cap, or the broken chain, Justice a blindfolded woman carrying a pair of weighing scales.

Nationalism and Imperialism

Nationalism no longer retained after the last quarter of the nineteenth century. After 1871, the most tensioned area was called the Balkans a region comprising modern-day Romania, Bulgaria, Albania, Greece, Macedonia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Slovenia, Serbia and Montenegro.

Ottoman Empire made the Balkans region explosive and all through the nineteenth century they strengthened themselves through modernisation and internal reforms. Due to various conflicts the Balkan became an area of intense conflict.

During this period, intense rivalry built among the European powers over trade and colonies as well as naval and military might which led to a series of wars in the region and finally the First World War.

In 1914, Europe was disastered because of Nationalism, aligned with imperialism. Anti-imperial movements were developed but they all struggled to form independent nation-states. But the idea of 'nation-states' was accepted as natural and universal.