

Q. "Prince Metternich is regarded as the incarnation of the restoration and reaction." Why??

Introduction

During the time period of 1815-1848, Metternich played a pivotal role in setting the political order of Europe towards conservatism and restoring the absolute monarchies that were abolished during the rule of Napoleon. As the foreign minister and state chancellor of Austria, Metternich used his position to articulate his ideals in the Concert of Europe. Concert of Europe served as a platform for uniting the monarchies of Europe and suppressing the revolutions against the monarchical order. Hence, due to his efforts to revive monarchy and to maintain it through the use of force and repressive policies, Metternich can be regarded as the incarnation of restoration and reaction.

Reversion to the old order of monarchy

Napoleon had altered the political landscape of Europe. He ensured that the previously established monarchies in Europe were dethroned and people could live the spirit of liberty that the French revolution advocated. However, after the downfall of Napoleon in the Battle of Waterloo (1814), Metternich used

the political vacuum to restore the old order. During the union of the great powers of Russia, Austria, Britain and Prussia at the Congress of Vienna (1815), it was decided that the rulers of the countries that were abdicated by Napoleon shall be restored. Due to this the Bourbons got their power back in France. House of Savoy got control of Piedmont-Sardinia. Ferdinand VII was restored in France and alongside this different smaller states of Europe such as Denmark and Holland also restored the monarchs.

Redrawing of the boundaries

Napoleon had transformed the cartographic dynamics of Europe during his power between 1799-1814. He had unified Italy and Germany and consolidated them under the French rule. However, after his power had diminished, Metternich sought to restore the boundaries of Europe as per the Pre-Napoleonic era of 1796. Due to this, Italy was again divided. According to Metternich:

“Italy is a geographical expression.”

He gave its provinces of Piedmont-Sardinia to the ruler of House of Savoy. Austria got control of Lombardy and Venetia.

Whereas in the central Italy and the Papal states, control of Pope was restored. In Germany, he founded the task for redividing the 39 states into 300 states as per the older maps. However, he transformed German states into a confederation under the rule of Austrian king. Additionally, Metternich ensured that Belgium and Holland should be united into a kingdom of Netherlands. This allowed a buffer state against France in the northern frontier. Hence, Metternich restored and recalibrated the boundaries of European countries to serve his interests.

Restoring the Balance of Power

Metternich's policies were not to induce a new war. He wanted to maintain a status quo and a balance of power between European countries so that peace could be maintained. In order to do that, he firstly united the European powers under the umbrella of Concert of Europe. Secondly, he initiated policies to cut down the might of France that was established by Napoleon. He made France pay indemnity and also diminished the strength of its army. Moreover, France was reduced in size as its foreign territories were given to the rulers of other great powers. Likewise, the unification of Belgium and Holland was

done to control the influence of France. Other than this, Metternich also sought to control the influence of Russia in Balkans. Although Russians wanted to assist Greeks in gaining independence from Turkey, Metternich opposed Tsar from interfering. Hence, he ensured that his diplomatic policies were such that no country could gain excess power and balance of power was restored in Europe.

Suppressing Nationalism and Liberalism

The only 'ism' that Metternich favored was that of conservatism. He was against the rising sentiments of nationalism, liberalism and republicanism. According to Metternich:

"Democracy can turn day light into a dark night."

He adopted repressive policies to ensure that people do not kindle the spirit of nationalism and liberalism. In Germany, he advocated for the issuance of Carlsbad decrees, as a result there was press censorship, education was controlled and media and publications were used as instruments of propaganda to suppress the

booming ideologies. Hence, he enforced repressive policies through which conservatism was promoted and feelings of nationalism and liberalism were suppressed.

Policy of interference to suppress revolutions

Metternich wanted to curtail any sort of revolutionary activities against the ruling monarchs. He wanted to ensure that there is no such activity in any European state so that other states also refrain from rebelling against their ruler. As a result he used the form of Concert of Europe to legitimise his demands for exercising interference in all European states to suppress revolutions through force and espionage. As a result in the Trochu Agreement (1820) and later in the Congress of Verona (1822), Metternich took counsel to interfere in the uprisings in Italy and Spain. Hence, as a result he was able to successfully subdue many revolutions by interfering in the internal matters of different European states.

Conclusion

Therefore, it can be concluded that Metternich was an incarnation of restoration.

and reaction because he restored the old monarchical order in Europe and spread his ideology of conservatism.

Additionally, to maintain the status quo he introduced repressive policies such as censorship and state control and he interfered in the governance of other states so that any revolutions against the existing order could be neutralised.