

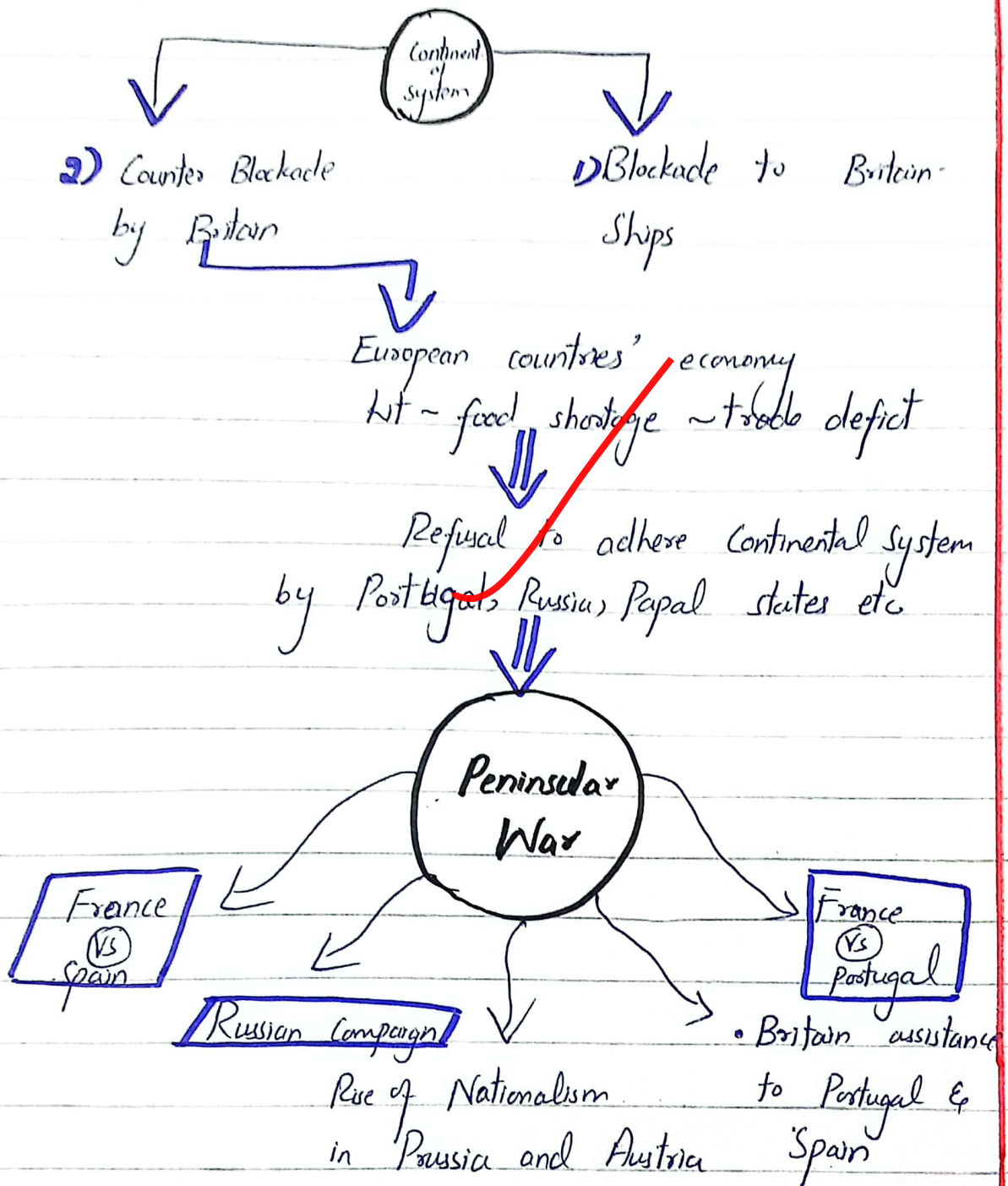
Q Critically evaluate the phenomenon of Napoleonic regime. Whether it was a "military dictatorship" or "the victory of the state"? Do comment.

Q What was the continental system and why did Napoleon try to enforce it after 1806? Why did he fail? Explain.

INTRODUCTION

The hegemonic ambitions of Napoleon Bonaparte in the Europe continent led him to adopt different strategies against the European opponents. Russia, England, Prussia, Germany had formed coalition to stop the expansionist policies of Napoleon. After becoming the emperor of France in 1804, Napoleon was confident about the military capability. He succeeded in defeating the alliances against him except Great Britain. Due to naval supremacy, Britain always remained dominant upon Napoleon. In 1801 after "Peace of Amiens" between Britain and France, both powers engaged in Trafalgar (Naval battle). Napoleon's army again defeated due to highly organized manoeuvres of Naval commander Nelson of Britain. After number of defeats Napoleon sought to hit the economic power of Britain which was the main driver of her supremacy. He adopted an economic

Continental System: A Misguided Shift



was strategy to cripple the economy of Britain. Consequently he failed miserably in this strategy and it became one of the reasons of Napoleonic downfall.

Continental System

"Continental System was an economic war strategy enforced by Napoleon from (1806 - 1810) on her allies to close the European market for Britain products. The main purpose behind this strategy was to cripple the economic power of Britain that she was using in making alliances against Napoleon. As Europe was the main market of Britain exports, Great Britain was earning revenues and her budget surplus was heavily relied upon European market."

Miscalculation of Napoleon:

Napoleon thought that if allies close the ports for European ships then the chaos in Britain would lead her towards establishing peace with France like they made earlier in "Peace of Amiens" in 1802. But that was a temporary peace treaty because this did not lessen their suspicions against each other. The unresolved matter of "Malta" - island of Mediterranean sea also led to break down of that peace-treaty.

Napoleon failed his goal because the continental system did more harm to Napoleon than Britain.

Stages in Continental War

1) Berlin Decree:

Napoleon ordered its allies, vessel state for blockade of British goods. Resultantly, British also gave "orders in Council" to seize all the ships trading with France and her allies.

Results of Economic War ~ Failure of Continental System

1) Although British economy affected by this but not that much as Napoleon thought. The industrial revolution in Britain and other trading allies beside Europeans helped her in economic sustainability. But the European countries affected severely by Britain-counter blockade.

- * Lack of Foreign goods in Europe.
- * Scarcity of food
- * High Tariffs which were not suitable for the Merchant class of Napoleon allies.
- * Merchants and Middle classes started protests against Napoleon.
- * High inflation
- * Allies gradually refused to adhere to the Continental system. e.g. Russia, Papal states.

refused to adhere the continental system

ii) Prussian and Spanish Nationalism:

The Nationalism emerged in Spain as well as in Prussia against Napoleon. French revolution ideas were used to arouse people against serfdom and independence from French - oppression.

iii) Napoleon engaged in War With Portugal:



Portugal was one of the state upon which Napoleon had no control especially on its coastline. So, Portugal refused to adopt continental system as she has signed many commerce agreements with Britain.

France asked help from Spain to join French army to occupy Portugal. Napoleon promised to give one part of Portugal to Spain after its division but had actually no intention to do so. Hence, France deceived Spain, resultantly Spanish turned against Napoleon and nationalism emerged. Britain also joined Portugal and Spain against their struggle with France.

iv) Austria re-entered the war ~ Battle of (1809) Wagram

Austria took advantage of the situation. She thought that due to failure of Continental system, Napoleon had been engaged in multiple skirmishes as well as wars with Portugal, Spain, Britain and Prussia. She had organized her military as well after many defeats from Napoleon army.

Austria wanted to recapture the Vienna, which had been occupied by France in "Treaty of Camp Formio". At Battle of Wagram, Napoleonic army defeated Austria again. After some time, he married the daughter of Emperor II of Austria, for future alliance.

v) Russian campaign against Continental System and Retreat to Napoleon:-

Czar Alexander I was not in favor of Continental system. Large amount of revenue of Russia was dependent upon trade with Britain. Due to enforcement of Continental system, Russian economy was in bad condition. Russia was at edge of Bankruptcy.

Russian evasion of Continental system was assured by the fact that many British products were reexported from Russia to Europe by smuggling.

How did this system end? Was it a success?

Moreover, by the refusal of Russia, Napoleon started war against Russia in which Napoleon army was defeated miserably by the Russian "scorched earth policy" in which Russians burnt crops, villages so that French army ^{would} suffer from weather conditions and hunger. The harsh winter of Russian terrain coupled with hunger severely affected Napoleon army.

Hence, French army weakened. In this way Continental system became a far greater burden to France herself.

Conclusion

The Continental system was formulated to weaken the Great Britain economic power but it resulted in Napoleon's fall down and as a greater burden on its allies who were dependent upon the Britain imports and trade for revenue generation. Gradually, the opposition started against Napoleon's misunderstood strategies. Merchant class, middle class stood against him. French army involved in Peninsular war with many countries at a time resulting in failure of Continental system, which also led to the downfall of Napoleon.