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The Congress of Vienna

After Waterloo, diplomats and heads of state again sat down at the Congress of Vienna. They faced the monumental task of restoring stability and order in Europe after 25 years of war.

Glittering spectacle. The Congress met for 10 months, from September 1814 to June 1815. It was a brilliant gathering of European leaders. Diplomats, courtiers, and royalty dined and danced, attended concerts and ballets, and enjoyed hunting parties and picnics arranged by their host, Emperor Francis I of Austria. Beneath the glittering spectacle, paid spies slipped in and out of rented palaces, anxious to find out who was saying what to whom.

Serious work. While the entertainment kept thousands of smaller players busy, the real work fell to Prince Clemens von Metternich of Austria, Czar Alexander I of Russia, and Lord Robert Castlereagh (KAS uhl ray) of Britain. Defeated France was also invited to send a representative to Vienna, Prince Maurice Talleyrand.

The chief goal of the Vienna decision makers was to create a lasting peace by establishing a balance of power and protecting the system of monarchy. Each of the leaders also pursued his own goals. Metternich, the dominant figure at the Congress, wanted to restore the status quo (Latin for "the way things are") of 1792. Alexander I urged a "holy alliance" of Christian monarchs to suppress future revolutions. Lord Castlereagh was determined to prevent a revival of French military power. The aged diplomat Talleyrand shrewdly played the other leaders against one another to get defeated France accepted as an equal partner.

The Vienna Settlement

Despite clashes and controversies, the diplomats at Vienna finally worked out a framework for peace. Their decisions set the stage for European politics for the next 100 years.

Balance of power. The peacemakers redrew the map of Europe. (See the map on page 502.) To contain French ambitions, they ringed France with strong countries. In the north, they added Belgium and Luxembourg to Holland to create the kingdom of the Netherlands. To prevent French expansion eastward, they gave Prussia lands along the Rhine River. They also allowed Austria to reassert control over northern Italy. This policy of containment proved fairly successful in maintaining the peace.

Stability. To turn back the clock to 1792, the architects of the peace promoted the principle of legitimacy, restoring hereditary monarchies that the French Revolution or Napoleon had unseated. Even before the Congress began, they had put Louis XVIII on the French throne. Later, they restored "legitimate" monarchs in Portugal, Spain, and the Italian states.

To protect the new order, Metternich pushed to create the Concert of Europe, a peacekeeping organization. It included alt of the major European . states. Leaders pledged to maintain the balance of power and to suppress any uprisings inspired by the ideas of the French Revolution.

Problems of the peace. The Vienna statesmen achieved their immediate goals However, they failed to foresee how powerful new forces such as nationalism would shake the foundations of Europe. They redrew national boundaries without any concern for national cultures.

In Germany, they created a loosely organized German Confederation with Austria as its official head. But Germans who had battled Napoleon were already dreaming of a strong unwed German nation. Their dream would not come true for more than 50 years, but the story of German unification began in this period.

Looking ahead. Many people inspired by revolutionary ideals condemned the Vienna settlement. Still, the general peace lasted for a hundred years. Europe would not see war on a Napoleonic scale until 1914.

Yet the ideals of the French Revolution were not destroyed. In the next decades, its slogan and goals would inspire people in Europe and Latin America to seek equality and liberty. The spirit of nationalism ignited by Napoleon remained a powerful force.

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CONGRESS OF VIENNA

Directions: If the statements below are true, circle T. If they are false, circle F and rewrite the statement to make it correct.

1. The Congress of Vienna was set up and organized by Emperor Francis I of France. T / F
_____
_____

2. Since Napoleon's France had been defeated, France did not have a representative present in Vienna. T / F _____
_____

3. One goal of the Congress of Vienna was to get rid of all kings. T / F _____
_____

4. Count Metternich wanted to return Europe to the way it was before 1792. T / F _____
_____
_____

5. One goal of the Congress was to try to prevent France from militarily dominating Europe again. T / F _____
_____
_____

6. The Congress of Vienna wanted to return "legitimate" kings back to their thrones. T / F
_____
_____

7. European leaders hoped that one nation would eventually become stronger than the others. T / F
_____
_____

8. The Congress of Vienna only had short term success. T / F _____
_____

9. Revolutionary leaders were happy with the outcome of the Vienna Congress. T / F
_____

10. The French Revolution continued to inspire people in Europe and Latin America to seek freedom and equality. T / F _____
_____
_