Name: _____ Date: _____ Period: _____

The Congress of Vienna

by Frederick C. Schneid

The Congress of Vienna was a series of meetings that were convened by the Allied Powers to discuss the fate of Europe after the defeat of Napoleon. The objective was to restore peace and stability and the balance of power in Europe. The conservative members of the congress were determined to undo the gains by the revolutionaries and to suppress any notion of revolutions in the conquered territories and in Europe overall.

Secondary Source:

The Congress of Vienna, which met officially from September 1814 through June 1815, was the most significant diplomatic conference since the **Peace of Westphalia** in 1648. The **doctrine** established by the participating powers was—in most cases—far more important than the specific redistribution of territories that the diplomats discussed and determined in detail.

The congress accepted the principle of a European balance of power enforced by **collective** action. The use of territorial compensation as a means of maintaining a general balance became the method of preventing any immediate or future *hostilities* among European powers.

At the conclusion of the conference, the conservative powers of Austria, Russia, and Prussia also moved to **suppress** future revolutionary movements and to uphold the **legitimacy** of monarchical powers. The congress worked out and reaffirmed the articles of the **Treaty of Paris 1814**, which concluded the Napoleonic Wars. Austria, Prussia, Russia, and Great Britain temporarily put aside their differences and geopolitical interests to defeat Napoleon. With victory **imminent**, the allied powers moved quickly to secure territory and guarantees for their specific interests in Europe…

The French argued that the restoration of the Bourbons necessitated the acceptance of France as an equal among the major powers. Spain, Portugal, and Sweden similarly demanded a seat at the table, as they had been members of the anti-French **coalition** that had defeated Napoleon.

Glossary:

Peace of Westphalia: a series of treaties that ended the Thirty Years' War

doctrine: principle

collective: cooperation

suppress: crush

legitimacy: rightful; lawful

Treaty of Paris 1814: Treaty ended the Napoleonic Wars

imminent: about to happen

coalition: alliance; union

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Citation: Frederick C. Schneid, "Congress of Vienna," in *Europe 1789–1914: Encyclopedia of the Age of Industry and Empire*, eds. John Merriman and Jay Winter (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2006), 532–535.

The Congress of Vienna *continued*

Although the members of the European alliance had temporarily put aside their respective differences, specific territorial interests and particular concerns for the future geopolitical structure of Europe were foremost on their minds…

This critical problem was resolved by January 1815, when all parties grudgingly agreed to a middle course. Russia received two-thirds of the grand duchy, while Prussia annexed a third of Saxony and gained significant expansion of its territories on the Rhine. This compromise **satiated** Alexander and Frederick William III, gave Metternich and Austria a sense of "**equilibrium**" in central Europe, and kept France at bay by strengthening Prussia in the west. …

The Congress of Vienna produced a relatively viable and lasting peace in Europe for the next century. Although the doctrine of revolutionary suppression did not last beyond midcentury, the concept of diplomatic negotiation and territorial compensation to limit state expansion was quite successful in restraining European conflicts and mitigating their consequences. What made the congress unique, however, was that its participants agreed to this new system of international relations as a principle and did not define it solely by their immediate desires.

Glossary:

satiated: satisfied

equilibrium: balance

Citation: Frederick C. Schneid, "Congress of Vienna," in *Europe 1789–1914: Encyclopedia of the Age of Industry and Empire*, eds. John Merriman and Jay Winter (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2006), 532–535.

Memoirs of Prince Metternich

by Klemens von Metternich

Prince Klemens von Metternich (1773–1859) was a politician and statesman for the Austrian Empire, and served as the chief Austrian minister during the Congress of Vienna, a set of meetings in 1814 and 1815 of major European leaders to promote peace and divide national boundaries after the Napoleonic Wars.

This excerpt from Prince Klemens von Metternich's memoir, written in the 1850s and published in 1879, details his interpretation of the events that led up to the Congress of Vienna in 1815. The French Revolution and the ensuing Napoleonic Wars had uprooted monarchies throughout Europe and replaced them with leaders chosen by Emperor Napoleon. After Napoleon's defeat, Metternich felt that restoring pre-revolutionary power systems and redefining national boundaries to favor Germany and Austria over France would be the best course for lasting peace in Europe. As leader of the Congress of Vienna, many of Metternich's proposals were implemented by European leaders.

Primary Source:

The history of the [Vienna] Congress is written in its Acts and in its results, and has no place in these pages. It has experienced the destiny of all remarkable events, it has not escaped the criticism of the prejudiced, or the censure of the superficial; and, in order to estimate the importance of its transactions, the consideration may **suffice** that from this Congress the foundations of the political peace which has **subsisted** for eight-and-thirty years have proceeded, and that its most important decrees have been able not only to **defy** the storms which arose in the intermediate period, but even to survive the revolutions of the year 1848.

…In looking back, quite **impartially**, on the results of the Congress now concluded, I may be allowed to say a few words. . . .

The fatal result to Napoleon of the campaign in Russia did not deceive the **Emperor Francis** as to the difficulty of attaining for the Continent a secure political peace. That the political rebuilding required after Napoleon's fall would be a most difficult task was evident to the Emperor and myself. In our views and feelings, the rejection of all undertakings founded merely on **sentiment predominated** so strongly as to give to the work

Glossary:

suffice: be enough

subsisted: existed

defy: fly in the face of

impartially: without bias

Emperor Francis: emperor of Austria during the Congress of Vienna
sentiment: opinions and feelings (as opposed to facts)
predominated: took control over

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Citation: Klemens von Metternich, *Memories of Prince Metternich* (London: Spottiswoode and Co., 1879), 253–257.

Memoirs of Prince Metternich *continued*

whose **forerunners** were the victories of **the Alliance**, and whose result was the [Congress of Vienna], the same impress of quiet deliberation, which had marked our course in the preliminary period.

There was no doubt that if the Congress confined itself to the limits of calm calculation, it would be exposed to great opposition. The longest time of political peace which Europe has ever enjoyed would, however, **suffice to tranquillise** the conscience of the **great monarch and his assistant**, even if the work of the Congress itself had not remained triumphantly fireproof in *the years 1848 and 1849*!

Glossary:

forerunners: people who came before; predecessors
the Alliance: the major European nations who fought against Napoleon, including Great Britain, Russia, Austria, and Prussia.

suffice to tranquillise: enough to calm down
the great monarch and his assistant: Emperor Francis and Metternich, his assistant

Citation: Klemens von Metternich, *Memories of Prince Metternich* (London: Spottiswoode and Co., 1879) , 253–257.

Charles Talleyrand on the Congress of Vienna

by Maurice de Taylleyrand

Charles Maurice de Talleyrand (1754–1838) was a French politician and diplomat. His long history of public service combined with his relationship with French royalty earned him the position of chief negotiator during the Congress of Vienna. The 1814–15 Congress of Vienna was a series of meetings among European leaders who sought to divide and restore national boundaries that had been disrupted by the Napoleonic Wars. The nations that had been victorious in the wars (Russia, Prussia, Austria, and Britain) dominated. But France, represented by Prince Talleyrand, managed to gain a significant voice in the negotiations as well. In this 1815 letter to King Louis XVIII, Talleyrand reports on the Congress and describes France's goals and influence there.

Primary Source:

In this state of affairs France ought naturally to have [played a more active role]. But as **the Powers** could not have accepted this offer without **renouncing** their favorite idea of isolating France, it only raised their **apprehensions**, and caused assistance from such a quarter to be regarded as a remedy worse than the disease. They were alarmed at the idea of seeing a French army reappear, even as an **auxiliary** or an ally, in the countries which the French had so often overrun as conquerors. These apprehensions were increased and fed by many publications which appeared in Paris. Nevertheless the French embassy succeeded in **allaying** them by patience, moderation, and good sense.

A treaty of alliance between France, Austria, and England was concluded on the 3rd of January, to which the Low Countries, Bavaria, and Hanover acceded. The coalition was thenceforward entirely dissolved, and France had no longer to fear being imprisoned in the iron circle which the Powers were preparing to draw round her.

This alone would have been much, even if France had derived no further advantage from her presence at the Congress. But this treaty caused a complete change in the position of the French embassy: on all sides advances were eagerly made to us…

Glossary:

the Powers: Russia, Prussia, Austria, and Britain

renouncing: rejecting

apprehensions: fears

auxiliary: reserve or backup

allaying: easing, calming

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Citation: Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord, "Letters 99 and 100," in The *Correspondence of Prince Talleyrand and King Louis XVIII During the Congress of Vienna*, ed. and trans. M.G. Pallain, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1881), 271–272, 279.

Charles Talleyrand on the Congress of Vienna *continued*

Had Austria been less timid, and Lord Castlereagh less anxious to preserve peace, the treaty of the 3rd of January might have led to the re-establishment of Poland and the preservation of the whole of the kingdom of **Saxony**. As it is, Russia has been obliged to relinquish the half of her claims upon the duchy of Warsaw, and Saxony has been as it were dragged from the grave, not, it is true, unscathed, but nevertheless with a territory equal to that of the kingdom of Hanover or Wiirtemberg, and this she certainly owes to France.

The French ambassador was instructed to use his utmost **endeavors.**

1. That Prussia should not be placed in contact with France. The frontiers of the two countries will nowhere touch.

2. That Prussia should not acquire **Luxemburg and Mayence**. She will have neither; both will be federal fortresses.

3. That her influence in Germany should not become exclusive, nor too predominant. This, indeed, was the principal object intended to be accomplished by the federal organization, which, however, there was no time to carry into effect.

4. That the organization of Switzerland should remain as it was; and it remains so.

5. That the independence of Switzerland should be secured; and it is secured.

6. That in all future European wars Switzerland should enjoy permanent neutrality, which is as essential to French as to Swiss interests. This neutrality has been guaranteed.

. . .The **foregoing** were doubtless the most important points for France in the then situation of Europe and of France herself. To obtain them all her efforts were therefore directed, and at first she had small hope of succeeding. Yet when the event happened, which brought about the present war, the French embassy had obtained them all. . . .

Glossary:

Saxony: a region in modern-day southern Germany

endeavors: attempts

Luxemburg and Mayence: regions near the former border of Prussia that the Prussian government wanted to control.

foregoing: earlier

Citation: Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord, "Letters 99 and 100," in The *Correspondence of Prince Talleyrand and King Louis XVIII During the Congress of Vienna*, ed. and trans. M.G. Pallain, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1881), 271–272, 279.

Viscount Castlereagh on the Congress of Vienna

by Viscount Castlereagh

Robert Stewart (1769–1822), the Viscount Castlereagh, was Britain's leading representative at the Congress of Vienna, a set of meetings in 1814 and 1815 of major European leaders held to promote peace and divide national boundaries after the Napoleonic Wars. Castlereagh was an influential British politician; as British Foreign Secretary he helped to defeat Napoleon in the Napoleonic Wars. In this 1815 speech in Britain's Parliament, Lord Castlereagh (the British representative at the Congress of Vienna) describes what he believed to be the objectives of the Congress.

After the French Emperor Napoleon was defeated in 1814, over 200 leaders of European nations and city-states met in Vienna, Austria, to redistribute European borders and draft the terms of peace. The Napoleonic Wars had left Europe in turmoil, disrupting centuries-old borders and treaties and uprooting the balance of power. While representatives to the Congress vigorously debated many issues, nearly all the representatives agreed that a figure such as Napoleon should never be allowed to conquer so much European territory again.

Primary Source:

. . . It was perfectly understood, during the whole of the negotiations for the general peace, that the great object of the sovereigns of Europe was the re-establishment and the re-organization of those two great monarchies, which, to all practical purposes, had been destroyed during the war—Austria and Prussia. To do this it became necessary to establish a security for the **flanks** of those monarchies: a power between the north of Germany and France, and a power acting as a barrier between Italy and France, to prevent them from coming into contact. It was necessary also to maintain the independence of Switzerland, and to restore the constitution of the German states. The question was, whether the arrangements which had been made were calculated to effect these great objects—whether the assembled powers had **endeavoured unduly** to **aggrandize** themselves, or faithfully to execute their trust.

Glossary:

flanks: borders

endeavoured unduly: put too much effort into

aggrandize: make more powerful

Citation: Robert Stewart, Address Respecting the Congress at Vienna, United Kingdom, House of Commons Debate 20, March 1815, Vol. 30, 265–305.