The Revolutions of 1848. Who and Why?

Why were there so many revolutions in 1848?

We have already looked at the main reasons that revolutions broke out in many parts of Europe in 1848:

- Many places were still *absolute monarchies* and the way of life in the countryside was still often still *feudal*.
- The economies were changing due to *industrialisation* and the rise of *capitalism*.
    - This meant that *merchants* were becoming richer than some of the old *lords*.
    - People who worked in older trades were losing their jobs because of new machinery.
    - People from the countryside moved into cities, where conditions were often poor.
- New ideas were popular such as countries having *constitutions*, more *democracy* and even replacing kings with *republican* governments.
- New *technology*, such as *railways* and the *telegraph* meant that news and new ideas could spread more quickly.
- Food shortages led to the 1840s being called *The Hungry Forties*. The people were hungry and discontented.

Who wanted a revolution (and who did not)?

Different groups of different people wanted different things. Please put the words in the box into the correct spaces in the sentences below:

peasants, aristocrats, Liberals, monarchists, Republicans, socialists, nationalists

Many _____ wanted to be free of their duties to the feudal lords.

The _____ (lords and princes) wanted to keep their wealth and power.

_____ wanted more democracy and a capitalist economy.

_____ wanted to have no kings or lords; they were opposed by _____ who believed in being loyal to their king.

The most radical people were _____ who wanted the government and society to provide work and security for the common people.

In countries that were colonies or not united, _____ wanted the countries to be united and independent.

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Why did most of the revolutions fail?

There were a number of reasons that the revolutions did not succeed. Most importantly:

- The different revolutionary groups did not all want the same thing and would not agree on how to change their countries. The revolutionaries were **disunited**.
- Powerful forces such as **the church** and **the army** in many countries are loyal to the king and the old order.
- Other countries were often afraid of these revolutions and would send armies to **invade** and put down the revolutions.

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