

英语学习背景知识：

欧洲概观

Cultural Background for
English Study：
A Survey of Europe

来鲁宁 编注
赵伯英 校订

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著作责任者 : 来鲁宁 编注

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简 介

本书介绍了欧洲国家的历史、地理、政治以及文化、教育、宗教、生活习俗等人文背景方面的基本情况,尤其是对欧洲联盟组织作了较系统的介绍。对文中涉及的许多背景知识和语言难点,作了较详细的注释。全书语言标准、规范、地道且风格各异。读者在提高英语阅读水平的同时,可以了解到欧洲概况以及欧洲对人类文明史的影响。

前 言

随着全球化的迅猛发展,人类进入了一个新的千年。世界已经发生了巨大变化,在局部冲突不断的同时,人们也越来越深刻地领会了“地球村”的含义。交通运输、信息传播、经济贸易以及种种世界性的事务和问题已经把世界各地联系在一起,各国、各地区的人民紧密相连,息息相关。因此,人们希望更多地了解世界,并且开始从相互关联的角度审视世界的变化和发展。正是为了适应人们了解世界并同时学习英语的需要,《欧洲概观》介绍了关于欧洲(特别是西欧)的概况。

欧洲曾在科学技术、文化思想、经济发展方面领先于世界各国,一度成为“世界的中心”。但是,两次世界大战把世界拖入血流成河的灾难,不仅给人类带来了空前的浩劫,欧洲本身也衰落了。战后的欧洲各国逐步走上区域联合的道路,旨在消除战争,维护和平,实现共同繁荣。如今,在欧洲联盟的旗帜下,欧洲的综合实力与日俱增,在世界上的地位不断上升,并且在继续推进深化和扩大的一体化进程,以图成为二十一世纪多极世界上的重要一极。

本书较全面地介绍了欧洲的情况,包括地理概况、气候与环境、历史与文化遗产、民族、语言与宗教、经济、教育、生活方式以及战后的一体化进程,让人们在学习英语的过程中了解欧洲,在了解欧洲的过程中提高英语水平。

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1. Major Regions

The European countries , in particular those in Western and Central Europe , have something in common. The big four Western European nations—Great Britain , France , Germany , and Italy have made the greatest contribution to the shaping of European politics. They have not only influenced each other , but also the whole world. The small countries had their share in the making of European society but on a smaller scale , and they have been more open to influence of the four larger nations. Germany (82 million inhabitants) , France (61.1 million) , and Italy (57.69 million) have probably had a larger impact on European society than Great Britain (59.5 million).

Western European nations can be divided into different geographic regions.

(1) The British Isles^①

Both in Great Britain and Ireland , almost everything is different from the European continent. Great Britain preceded the continent in a great number of political developments. It reached political unity before most continental countries and put an end to royal aspirations of absolutism more than one century before the French Revolution , and

① the British Isles 不列颠诸岛 ,包括英国、爱尔兰、马恩岛以及邻近的一些小岛。

without any bloodshed. The Industrial Revolution also went off in Great Britain. Nation building , democratization and the industrial revolution succeeded each other with decades or even centuries in between , which allowed the British to address these problems in a reformist way. In political reform toward parliamentary democracy and industrialization , the country for a long time served as an example for other European nations. Since World War II it has abandoned any pretensions of being a great power , and due to its deviant system of parliamentary rule and its slackening economy , it has also lost its position as a pilot for Europe.

Despite its multinational nature , with Scotland and Wales beside England , Great Britain is one of Europe 's least politically divided societies , in which language and religion are no great issues. Northern Ireland is a case apart , but it is formally not a part of Great Britain (together with Great Britain it makes up the "United Kingdom"). Region is becoming more important because of a growing gap between the richer South and the less prosperous traditional industrial areas in Northern England and Scotland , which vote Labour^① and were neglected by the conservative governments of the 1980s and early 1990s. Social class is by far the strongest political issue in Great Britain but it is less disruptive than on the continent.

Ireland (3.6 million) was under British rule until 1921. The country has adopted several political elements from Great Britain , like the legal system and the civil service. It also shares with Great Britain the absence of political conflict. The Irish speak English and attempts to reintroduce the older Irish language have not changed that situation.

① Labour :the Labour Party 英国工党

Religion is not a source of division , either. Ireland is the only Catholic country in which religion is not a political issue. Religion pervades social life and politics , but the Catholic Church^① enjoys an uncontested position as a national institution because of its role in the liberation struggle against Great Britain. Even social class is not much of an issue , and the country does not have a big social democratic party. The country differs from Great Britain in its continental pattern of coalition governments and recent tripartite agreements.

(2) The “Big Three” of Continental Western Europe

I taly heavily influenced European culture (Roman Empire , Catholic Church , Renaissance^②) until the last centuries , when it lost its prominent position. Until national unification in 1870 it was divided among a number of city-states , like Venice^③ , and other independent units , since that time it has been united , but heavily divided. The high degree of internal division in Italy has left France and Germany as the two actual continental powers in Western Europe.

France has been a leading nation since the Middle Ages^④ in

① the Catholic Church 天主教

② Renaissance 文艺复兴 指古典艺术、建筑、文学和学识的人文主义复兴 ,于十四世纪早期始于意大利北部 ,后来蔓延到整个欧洲。

③ Venice [ˈvenɪs] 威尼斯 ,意大利东北部的城市 ,位于亚得里亚海北部的一个海湾。

④ the Middle Age : 中世纪 ,通常指公元 476 年西罗马帝国灭亡到十六世纪初文艺复兴这段历史时期。

politics (Louis XIV^①; Napoleon^②) and also in arts and culture. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, French was the international language in Europe. Since the 1789 French Revolution, important social movements, like the 1830 and 1848 revolutions and the 1968 student revolt, broke out in Paris and spread from there to other countries. Despite the fact that the country is second to Germany in economic power, it has always claimed a leading political role, to some extent based on its primacy in culture. The country considers itself as the only remaining European Great Power in international politics, after Great Britain gave up that pretension and the Soviet Union^③ collapsed, and with Germany in a less prominent international role since World War II. Its pilot role is not confined to politics. Paris functions as the cultural capital of Latin Europe^④, a position without counterpart in Germanic Europe^⑤.

Germany was a power during the Middle Ages as the “Holy Roman Empire,” but did not become a political unity until 1871. Since that unification, its aspirations to join the ranks of Great Britain and France as a Great Power were among the causes of the two world wars. After World War II, it has regained its position as Europe’s largest economy, but it has also maintained a low political profile,

① Louis XIV 路易十四世(1643—1715) 法国国王,在法国历史上在位时间最长。在其统治期内,路易十四加强了君主专制制度,建筑了豪华的宫殿,并通过发动战争,扩大了法国对欧洲的影响。

② Napoleon [nə'pəʊljən] 拿破仑一世,法国皇帝(1804—1814),军事战略家。

③ the Soviet Union: 苏联

④ Latin Europe 拉丁欧洲,指拉丁系民族国家,包括法国、西班牙、意大利等国家。

⑤ Germanic Europe: 日耳曼欧洲,指日耳曼民族国家,包括丹麦、挪威、瑞典、芬兰、德国、荷兰、比利时、卢森堡、瑞士、奥地利等国家。

(3) Scandinavia^①

Scandinavia is Europe's closest knit group of nations. Mutual bonds are helped by easy communication. The Scandinavians understand each other without having to take recourse to English (except for the Fins, who speak a non-Germanic language, but many of them also speak Swedish). Mutual cooperation in the Nordic Council^② and the sense of common identity, however, do not lead to great uniformity in international conduct. Differences in that field are also due to variations in national history. Sweden and Denmark have long been European powers, while Norway was under Danish and Swedish rule and Finland a part of the Russian Empire until the early twentieth century. As a relatively young nation, Norway is most nationalist in the classical sense. Sweden shares the Norwegian distance to Europe—any new referendum^③ on EU membership might easily lead to a “No” vote, as the two referendums in Norway did. Denmark is more European-minded, but only Finland wholeheartedly joined the European Union as an expression of its belonging to Europe. Finland has the most problematic past, with a civil war at the time of World War I, and annexation of parts of the country by the Soviet Union during World War II. Hundreds of thousands of Fins then fled to Finland—over ten percent of the total Finnish population. After World

① Scandinavia [ˌskændiˈneɪvjə] 斯堪的纳维亚 北欧的一个地区,包括挪威、瑞典和丹麦,芬兰、冰岛和法罗群岛通常也被包括在这一地区内。

② the Nordic Council 北欧委员会

③ referendum 公民投票

