

## Rüdiger Hachtmann

### Success and Failure: The Revolution of 1848

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RÜDIGER HACHTMANN

## ***Success and Failure: The Revolution of 1848***

It is difficult to state conclusively whether the German revolution of 1848 was a success or a failure. I take a more sceptical view of the positive consequences of this revolution view than many recent historians of the period, at least in Germany. In order to explain and substantiate this position, I will begin by outlining a few theses taking a closer look at the character of the German revolution of 1848 and its social and political base. Then I shall discuss the question of the 'success or failure of the revolution' and the long-term effects of the events and developments of the year 1848. In the following I shall concentrate primarily on Prussia as the centre of the later German Empire, and I shall focus particularly on the situation in the cities.<sup>1</sup>

### **I.**

From a socioeconomic standpoint, in the 1830s and 1840s (an era referred to in the historical literature as the *Vormärz* or pre-March period) German society was in the midst of radical changes. The traditional corporate order had been disintegrating for some time. In Prussia the guilds had been abolished as compulsory organizations (*Zwangsorganisationen*) in 1810–11. They persisted nevertheless as private associations. Apart from those of the aristocracy, estates in the classic sense had ceased to exist, but social classes (in the Marxist or Weberian sense) had not yet formed. The boundaries between the social strata were fluid. For this reason it is difficult to separate the various social strata from each other statistically with any precision. If we take existing local history studies for Germany as a basis, then

at mid-century in cities with more than 10,000 inhabitants, the proportion of the 'upper class', that is, the bourgeoisie (*Bürgertum*) in the narrower sense, was about 5 per cent, and that of the lower middle classes (*Mittelschichten*) 10 to 20 per cent. More than three-quarters of urban dwellers, between 75 per cent and 85 per cent, belonged to the lower classes (*Unterschichten*).

Although these figures can only describe general trends, they make clear that a small bourgeois upper class existed alongside a numerically gigantic 'proletariat' (as contemporaries already disparagingly referred to the lower classes). The proletariat of 1848 had little in common with the industrial proletariat of the last third of the century, however. The lower classes were so deeply divided internally, not only socioeconomically, but also culturally and politically, that the labour movement that arose during the year of the revolution could take root only in certain segments of the early proletariat, primarily among journeymen and skilled factory workers. In the light of the quite different development in England, one must also emphasize that in all cities life trades remained strongly craft dominated throughout the 1840s and in many cases long beyond. This was also true of the European revolutionary metropolises of Berlin, Vienna, Paris and those cities on the Continent that had already experienced the vigorous beginnings of industrialization in the 1830s.

For both reformist and revolutionary movements, a society in the midst of radical change was both a burden and an opportunity. Social conditions on the eve of the revolution represented an opportunity because everybody had come to recognize that 'society' was not something played out according to unchanging rules, not a closed system, but rather an open structure. The revolutionary developments in the fields of the natural sciences and technology during the first half of the nineteenth century, and the radical political changes that had occurred particularly in France, Germany's western neighbour, since the end of the eighteenth century had opened up new perspectives. They turned many contemporaries into political optimists and believers in progress. History no longer appeared as immutable destiny. To be sure, the openness of history and the attendant insecurity about what the future might bring aroused fears as well as hopes. Many members of the bourgeoisie and the lower middle classes were afraid of downward mobility and of the social and political demands being made by the numerically gigantic and seemingly unpredictable proletariat.

From the beginning, the revolution of 1848 was shaped by yet another burden: society was splintered into many social strata that

had little to do with each other. The bourgeoisie included the economic or propertied bourgeoisie (*Wirtschaftsbürgertum*) – the great merchants, bankers and manufacturers –, the higher civil servants on the state and municipal levels (who included, however, numerous members of the nobility) and, last but not least, the educated classes and free professions. The lower classes included journeymen, skilled factory workers and commercial clerks alongside day labourers, domestic servants and other mainly unskilled groups of workers, as well as impoverished master artisans who were frequently reduced to the status of homeworkers and, finally, the subproletariat. The lower middle classes were similarly heterogeneous.<sup>2</sup> The varying socio-economic positions frequently occasioned quite divergent, and from time to time conflicting, social and political interests. Even those social forces seeking reforms frequently had very different goals in mind. Germany's fragmentation into numerous smaller and larger states made coordinated efforts particularly difficult. A lack of simultaneous action and coordination, together with the divergent interests of the reformist and revolutionary movements, made the revolution's failure probable from the outset. The rather adroit operations of the old elites and traditional authorities after they had digested the initial shock in March 1848 were additional factors. I should like to address these points in more detail in what follows.

## II.

I shall begin with a thesis: the revolution of 1848 was not a bourgeois revolution – at least not if one has the bourgeoisie as a social class in mind. The bourgeoisie, to the extent that it took an oppositional stance at all, did seek political changes in the form of freedom of the press, assembly and opinion, as well as the right to a say in the political decision-making process. These, however, were reforms to be wrested from the crown, and they were not supposed to go too far. At any rate the great majority of the bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie did not want a revolution. The rigid and clumsy behaviour of the old authorities did provoke revolutionary uprisings in the capitals of the Habsburg and Hohenzollern monarchies. Under pressure from 'the street' in March 1848 all German states were transformed into constitutional monarchies. This did not, however, render obsolete the politics of avoiding revolution through cautious reform, which characterized the majority of the oppositional bourgeoisie. It did

change its character and political thrust, though. From now on the primary goal was to prevent a radicalization of the revolution through reform policies in agreement with the old powers, by 'arrangement' with the sovereign. To 'calm the general unrest' was the first order of the day, as Heinrich von Gagern was later to describe the viewpoint of the liberal majority among the deputies to the 'preliminary parliament', which met in Frankfurt's St Paul's Church from 31 March to 3 April 1848, and to the German National Assembly.<sup>3</sup>

The political rift, present from the beginning, between bourgeois-influenced liberalism and radical democracy, with its roots primarily in the lower classes, was only temporarily papered over during the euphoria of the first days after the March revolution. To be sure, in 1848 both camps were united initially in their desire for the abolition of the pre-March restrictions on the freedoms of association, assembly and the press. There was already great controversy, however, over how these attainments were to be organized in practice. The lower classes' demands for freedom had a strongly sociopolitical flavour, but the overwhelming majority of the bourgeoisie feared the consequences of their own wishes for reform. Fearing democratic 'anarchy' and social revolts, instead of insisting on the unrestricted right to assembly and association they became, after the March revolution, increasingly emphatic in their calls for barriers to what they regarded as 'excessive liberties'. The majority of the bourgeoisie rejected the vociferous demands for participation that the lower classes made during the revolutionary year. The lower classes, large segments of whom were highly suspicious of the authorities, and the oppositional bourgeoisie taken as a whole, shared few, if any, positive objectives, and then only on individual points, and only temporarily.

In order to give some indication of the extent of the political differences between pro-reform liberals and the democratic-revolutionary movement, which also included the nascent labour movement, I shall offer two examples here: the debates surrounding the suffrage and the arming of the people. Unlike the democrats, most liberal bourgeois did not favour universal and equal manhood suffrage, preferring instead a census suffrage, which excluded 'dependent' individuals and weighted votes according to the voter's income and property. In addition most of them wanted a bicameral parliamentary system. The monarch was also to retain a strong position. (England and Belgium were important models for the moderate liberals here.) To be sure, no census stipulations were introduced for the elections to the German National Assembly. The pressure from the democratic-revolutionary

movement was still too great in April 1848. In most states, however, the criterion of 'independence' could be established as a condition for participation in the elections. By these means up to one-quarter of the adult male population could be excluded from the suffrage – mainly wage-dependent members of the lower classes, most of whom embraced democratic attitudes. The liberals also succeeded, against the resistance of the democrats, in introducing an indirect electoral system. This meant that the primary voters did not elect the deputies themselves, but only so-called electoral delegates (*Wahlmänner*), who then elected the actual members of the German National Assembly. (A similar system was also introduced for elections to most parliaments of the individual states.) The 'independence' clause and the indirect method of election were filters built into the franchise that significantly weakened the democratic movement within the parliaments. Moreover, no true political parties existed in April 1848; the men elected were mainly prominent personalities. All of this explains why the German National Assembly and most provincial parliaments were dominated by moderate bourgeois notables, while the democratic currents in the revolution were underrepresented.<sup>4</sup> The actions of leading representatives of the bourgeois strata were guided in large measure by the desire to end the revolution as quickly as possible. This fact was also reflected in attitudes towards the questions of 'arming the people' and the reorganization of the police and military's functions in maintaining order in the larger cities. Above all, the lower classes were to be given no instruments of power that might allow them to insist effectively on the realization of their political and social demands. For this reason, during the founding and expansion of the civic guards (in German *Bürgerwehr* – the name says it all) only men who possessed municipal citizenship were accepted as members. Members of the lower classes were, as a rule, excluded from the right to bear arms.

The reasons why no reform coalition developed between the upper and lower classes become clearer when one examines the economic, social and political interests of particular segments of the bourgeoisie more closely. The economic bourgeoisie never favoured the 'revolution', even if they were reluctant to say so too loudly at the beginning. They were sceptical of even moderate political reforms. Only weeks after the March revolution, for example, the Berlin merchants' corporation, which represented the interests of the Prussian capital's bankers, merchants and entrepreneurs, demanded in an internal document in no uncertain terms that the ministry and the city



government (*Magistrat*) must secure 'peace in public life and [restore] lost faith in the public administration of the laws'. In the face of the 'danger which, under present circumstances, has deeply shaken all social relations, threatens property and prosperity', drastic measures were necessary. If the authorities did not take the 'most energetic measures' to oppose the supposed excesses of the proletarian and democratic movements, the merchants' corporation feared the 'dissolution of all social relations, a general state of emergency' and the 'horrors of anarchy'.<sup>5</sup> This attitude of the Berlin merchants' corporation cannot, to be sure, simply be generalized to include the entire Prussian, let alone German economic bourgeoisie. There were considerable regional differences. While the entrepreneurs of the Prussian capital were emphatically anti-revolutionary, their West German counterparts had more liberal attitudes and were more open to substantial reforms. The assertion of a basically conservative stance is even truer of the higher civil servants on the state and municipal levels. As a rule, they continued to feel an obligation of absolute loyalty towards the old authorities. Beginning in the summer of 1848, when it became clear that the political winds were blowing against the democratic-revolutionary movement, the civil servants, most of whom had remained in their posts, more openly demonstrated their conservative opinions and let democrats and 'simple folk' feel that the old masters were also the new ones.

If the economic bourgeoisie and the higher civil servants kept aloof from the revolution, this also reflected the fact that the 'modernizations' these strata believed desirable had already been realized in their essentials, at least in Prussia, long before 1848. One should mention in particular the introduction of freedom of trade in 1810–11 and the founding of the German customs union (*Zollverein*) in 1834. In the same measure as it had proved politically 'reactionary' during the pre-March (*Vormärz*), the Hohenzollern monarchy had shown itself favourable to economic modernization. Contemporaries in 1848 had no reason to believe that this would change in future. Moreover, developments in trades and industry had been rather adversely affected by the political tremors of 1848. Absolute 'peace and order' – under whatever political conditions – appeared to entrepreneurs to be the best guarantee of a renewed economic upswing, which did indeed set in at the end of 1848. The great self-assurance and faith in the future of the economic bourgeoisie in particular, the feeling that aristocratic privilege could no longer touch their own firm economic and political position, facilitated the decision to oppose any

substantial democratization of society. Moreover, many bourgeois did not need the revolution of 1848, and the countless lower-class tumults and revolts of that year, to make them enemies of revolution. Recollections of the great French revolution, above all of the phase between 1792 and 1794, of the Napoleonic occupation, and of the Paris July revolution of 1830, which had also been echoed in the German states, had become deeply engraved in the collective memories of these classes. The political and social fears were merely rekindled in 1848. It is not true that broad sections of the economic bourgeoisie and also the lower middle classes did not understand their 'objective interests' when they maintained a great reserve towards the upheavals of the revolution. The opposite is the case. It was precisely because the complete political equality of every citizen of the state, regardless of his social and economic position, contradicted their interests, at least in 1848, that the majority of the better-off classes of society did not embrace the revolution.<sup>6</sup>

A majority, but not the entirety, of the bourgeoisie rejected the revolution. The political behaviour of the educated classes, including the 'free professions', the third significant subgroup of the bourgeoisie, had very different contours from that of the civil servants and the economic bourgeoisie. Many members of the educated classes occupied leading positions in the democratic clubs. They were spokesmen at revolutionary mass meetings and demonstrations. The grassroots of the democratic-revolutionary movement in most larger towns were 'proletarian', but the leadership was bourgeois and educated. This group was dominated by young men of the starving writer variety, as well as journalists and members of related occupations, and finally, students, a sort of 'free-floating intelligentsia'. The educated classes by no means all belonged to the democratic camp, however. Rather, there was a sharp generational conflict: younger people in particular, who had been influenced by the religious conflicts and oppositional movements of the pre-March,<sup>7</sup> by radical democratic ideas and, in some cases, by the ideas of early socialism, were the ones who became enthusiasts of the 'new era'. It was also mainly younger people who were particularly active in the professional reform movements of physicians, university lecturers and teachers and who articulated demands in 1848 that were to remain relevant for many years to come, some of which were only realized in the twentieth century. Older men, in contrast, who were established in their professions and who had received their political socialization through the Wars of Liberation between 1813 and 1815, or the 'terrors' of the older French revolutions,



or at least through the (mild) shock of the 1830 July revolution, maintained a reserved attitude. If one looks at the social group of the bourgeoisie as a whole, then, only a small minority, namely a substantial portion of younger educated men, embraced 'revolutionary' ideas. In the face of political polarization the bourgeois-influenced political centre, liberalism, melted away rapidly – at least in Prussia, if more slowly in the smaller states of central, western and southern Germany.

### III

The revolution of 1848 was thus not a 'bourgeois revolution' – at least not if one takes the social class of the bourgeoisie as a yardstick. The German term *Bürgertum*, which I have translated here for the sake of simplicity as 'bourgeoisie', is however a multilayered one. It can also refer to *Staatsbürger*, the citizen of the state. If one uses this sense of the term *Bürger*, then the revolution of 1848 was indeed a 'bourgeois revolution': to be more precise, a revolution of citizens or a democratic revolution whose content was the establishment of 'bourgeois civil society', in German, *bürgerliche Gesellschaft*. After all, the agenda of 1848 – in abbreviated form – was the achievement of equal political rights for all men, independent of their social and economic status. In 1848 in Germany (in contrast to France), no side demanded social revolution, that is, the overturning of property relations or at least major interventions in the socioeconomic fabric. Even the early labour movement and the radical democrats did not pursue this as an immediate goal. In some German cities, however, socialist tendencies did gain in weight as it became apparent that the liberal March Cabinets had no intention of meeting the lower classes' social demands. Other subgroups within the revolutionary movement combined anticapitalism with pre-bourgeois utopias, such as the ideal of a closed guild society. The concept of 'bourgeois civil society' did not encompass the goals of all participants in the revolution. Nevertheless, even if those manning the barricades and leaving their mark on the subsequent events of the revolution were mainly members of the lower classes, 1848 was no 'proletarian' revolution. If one insists on a label, one might say that it was a revolution of citizens (*bürgerlich* in the sense of *staatsbürgerlich*).

The German revolution of 1848 was a profoundly paradoxical phenomenon. If one looks at the centres of revolutionary action,

proletarian strata, particularly journeyman artisans, impoverished ('proletaroid') independent artisans, commercial clerks and factory workers were the main actors. More than 85 per cent of the approximately 1000 Berlin barricade fighters known by name who were killed, wounded, or arrested by the military on 18 March 1848 belonged to the lower social strata. Similarly, members of the lower classes also made up the majority of insurgents in the Vienna March revolution, the storming of the Berlin armoury, and the October battles in Vienna.

In contrast, the parliaments and March Cabinets, which one might refer to as the 'institutionalized revolution', were dominated by the higher social classes: civil servants (particularly jurists), older educated men who were generally long established in their careers, and a significantly smaller number of bankers and early entrepreneurs.<sup>8</sup> In light of the basic attitudes prevalent among these social groups, it is not surprising that the liberal majorities in the German National Assembly as well as the provincial parliaments were interested in political reforms. There was, however, no majority in the parliaments of 1848 for fundamental social reforms that might have substantially improved the miserable conditions among the urban lower classes. A radicalization of the revolution was to be avoided at all costs. Most deputies did not realize that social reforms were the most effective preventive measure against social revolution. And even the political reforms proposed by liberals were based on a limited concept of citizenship encompassing only the bourgeoisie and segments of the lower middle classes.

Fear of the lower classes explains why a majority of the upper classes greeted the end of the revolution with undisguised relief. This can be followed particularly well in Berlin, where in mid-November 1848 a state of siege was declared, and where repression was thus especially harsh in the months that followed. The price that the bourgeoisie paid for the crown's victory – above all restrictions on the freedoms of assembly, association and the press – appears high only at first glance. In fact, the prohibitions on assembly primarily affected the lower classes. They were those most likely to assemble spontaneously in the streets. Their politics did not require formal organizations or elaborated programmes, agendas or committees. A brief description of their method of political action during the revolution might read as follows: journeymen, labourers and other members of the lower classes, including many women, gathered around the often very large placards posted by the clubs, the authorities, or individuals. They commented upon them loudly and argued

with fellow onlookers who uttered contrary opinions or expressed their agreement with equal vociferousness. This was how the 'political corners' typical of Berlin and many other cities in 1848 arose. They not infrequently became the starting point for spontaneous mass actions and (thus) for revolutionary events.<sup>9</sup> Politically active bourgeois, in contrast, including those who espoused democratic ideas, preferred self-contained, coherent organizations with predictable structures and enclosed meeting spaces. Clubs with a fixed membership and a formalized associational life as well as parliaments were (viewed from the perspective of ideal types) the political forms suitable for the bourgeois activist; he generally remained sceptical of vast and incalculable mass rallies and spontaneous demonstrations.<sup>10</sup>

The sceptical or even hostile attitude of most bourgeois and petty bourgeois, of whatever political persuasion, towards the forms of politics common among the lower classes explains why these strata in Prussia were relatively willing to dispense with the right of assembly that they had fought for in March. This does not, however, explain why the bourgeoisie and lower middle classes also largely accepted the restrictions placed on the freedom of association. Only the bourgeois democrats and left-liberals, a minority within the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie, clung firmly to the principle of democratically structured mass organizations. If a substantial majority of the better-off strata of society accepted the limitations on freedom of association announced in November 1848 without much protest, it was mainly for two reasons. Firstly, political associations were by no means universally prohibited. The authorities proceeded much more selectively than that. The radical democrats were hardest hit by the restrictions on association, followed by the moderate democrats and left liberals. The majority of liberal, conservative, or 'apolitical' citizens were largely unaffected. Secondly, most liberals preferred the model of the party of notables. Conservatives were fundamentally opposed to true political parties. Both right-wing liberals and conservatives remained suspicious of associations founded on the equality of all their members. After all, associations organized along democratic lines also permitted, as a matter of principle, the equal participation of members of the lower classes, a terrifying vision for wealthy citizens who feared social revolution and the overthrow of traditional property relations. Their terror grew when it became clear, in the summer of 1848, that the radical democratic clubs in Vienna, Berlin, Cologne and elsewhere actually possessed a broad and stable base among 'workers'. This was the main reason why the banning of

the democratic and (left-)liberal clubs in mid-November 1848 and the return to traditional forms of politics were met largely with relief by conservatives and also many liberals among the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie. Finally, restrictions on the press also affected primarily the radical democratic press, which (as the low print runs show) was scarcely read in bourgeois circles anyway, and thus were also accepted there without complaint.

These assertions apply primarily to Prussia, above all to the core provinces, but less to Silesia and the Rhine Province. In the smaller German states, particularly in the south west and Saxony, and here mainly in smaller towns where social and political polarization were less marked, the bourgeois and petty bourgeois strata were more strongly integrated into the revolutionary movement. If the majority of the Prussian bourgeoisie, in particular, increasingly followed the monarchy, the resentments and fears mentioned above were not the only decisive factors. Unlike the Habsburg monarchy, for example, the Prussian crown proved itself quite capable of learning political lessons from the revolution. It was well aware of the political and social fears of broad segments of the bourgeoisie and, from mid-1848 onward, it increasingly incorporated them into its political deliberations. In the face of the successful March revolution and a strong democratic movement, the Prussian monarchy saw itself compelled to seek additional allies in order to maintain power. It found them in the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie.

To be sure, the counter-revolution of November 1848 was the political work of the monarchy and the old non-bourgeois elites. In fact, however, it was no accident that from a legal as well as a political standpoint Berlin, Prussia and Germany had a different, more bourgeois face after 1848 than they had before. Although it continued to draw support largely from the traditional elites, the Prussian crown saw itself forced to make concessions to the guild-oriented artisanal petty bourgeoisie as well as to the economic bourgeoisie in order to gain the loyalty of these strata and to expand and stabilize its social base. These concessions included, among other things, dissolving the union-like organizations of the early labour movement by the summer of 1850 and amending the Prussian trade regulations (*Gewerbeordnung*) on 9 February 1849. The last action was a political gift to the conservative artisanal middle classes. It gave the trade guilds (*Innungen*) more influence by granting them greater authority in the training of apprentices, the admission of new craft firms and the like. More important, perhaps, than the actual content of these and other post-revolutionary

reforms was the political message they sent to the bourgeoisie and the lower middle classes: post-revolutionary Prussia was open to bourgeois and petty bourgeois wishes, and a thorough overturning of the political system was thus superfluous. Political moderation and loyalty to the monarchy, it was suggested, were the only paths to the realization of their goals that stood any chance of success.

The liberal constitution promulgated by the Prussian crown on 5 December 1848 was addressed to the same social strata and additionally nourished this attitude. The Hohenzollern monarchy proved itself politically more flexible than the Habsburg monarchy, particularly in this regard. While Prussia formally remained a constitutional state even after the amendment of the constitution in January 1850, in Austria the constitution promulgated on 4 March 1849 was repealed altogether in 1851. The introduction in Prussia on 30 May 1849 of a franchise linked to a property qualification, replacing both the old corporate provincial diets and the national assemblies of 1848 elected by universal and equal manhood suffrage, can be regarded as a concession to the dominant tendency within the bourgeoisie. It met the wishes of many bourgeois to separate themselves, socially and politically, from the classes beneath them. The three voter classes, which were organized according to tax revenues, corresponded to the bourgeois ethic of achievement and increased the influence of the propertied bourgeoisie, which was overrepresented in the lower chamber of Parliament. Later liberal critiques complained less of the inequality of the suffrage than of the parliament's relatively limited or vaguely defined rights.

The liberals, who were also internally split, were nevertheless only partial victors: the reform of the military, which they, like the democrats, hoped to achieve, if in a more moderate form, did not materialize. The dominance of the old pre-bourgeois elites remained unbroken. The liberals had also not wanted the draconian political and legal restrictions that became common in the 1850s. In the face of the supposedly looming threat of social revolution, however, the right-wing liberals, at least, were prepared to accept all of this as the lesser evil.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, many liberals, at least in northern and central Germany, regarded Prussia as the state most likely to succeed in uniting Germany. This goal became increasingly important after 1849. To be sure, not all liberals were willing to postpone or relinquish altogether demands for a reform of the political system in order to achieve national unity, but many were.

#### IV.

Even in 1848 serious differences had existed between the main political tendencies over what a united Germany would look like and under what political circumstances national unity should be achieved. The very terms 'nation' and 'German unity' could be invested with widely diverging contents. In order to get to the bottom of these differences, I shall enlist the help of the terms 'patriotism' and 'nationalism', whereby 'patriotism' aims at the coexistence of equal nations, and 'nationalism' implies the superordination of the German nation to other nations. Who could be regarded as a patriot according to this definition, and who, as a nationalist, became particularly clear in Prussia during late April and early May when the Poles of the Prussian Grand Duchy of Posen staged a revolutionary uprising to secure their own sovereign state.

By this definition, not only the conservatives, who were highly sceptical of German unification anyway, but also a substantial group among liberals in 1848 must be considered 'nationalist': for them, the maintenance of so-called 'German national traditions' (*deutsches Volkstum*) in the Prussian Grand Duchy of Posen had priority. At the same time they denigrated the Poles as an inferior nation and built up the Germans, at least culturally, into a superior nation who possessed the right to rule over supposedly inferior peoples. On 15 April 1848, the widely-read *Spenersche Zeitung*, for example, declared 'that it was an indisputable fact that the German folk character has always been called to a deeper and more perfect formation and a richer life development than the Slavic, that it unites within itself all the elements that entitle it to a complete representation of political and religious freedom'. To give in to the Poles' desire for political sovereignty would be 'nothing less than to reduce the higher life-element, the more mature and perfectly formed folk character, to a subordinate level' and to 'sacrifice' the German minority to 'a more immature nationality'. The left-liberal *National-Zeitung* also asserted (on 11 July 1848) that 'the Slavs were always behind the Teutons at all points in their development'. To grant political sovereignty to the Poles and other Slavs was thus 'impossible at present'. Attitudes such as these apparently met with a positive response among broad segments of the better-off population. They were uttered not least in the parliaments. The speech of the author and deputy Wilhelm Jordan, held during the so-called Polish debate on 24 July in Frankfurt's St Paul's Church, became famous. Jordan referred to the democratic deputies'



demand that the Poles also be granted national sovereignty, as 'idiotic sentimentality'. It was 'high time' that the Germans shed their 'dreamy self-forgetfulness and foolish enthusiasm for all manner of nationalities' and developed a 'healthy national egotism'. 'The superiority of the German tribe over most of the Slavic tribes' belonged to the 'facts of natural history'. He considered those who supported the Poles' right to national self-determination, and who were thus willing to 'cast adrift' the 500,000 Germans living in Posen, 'unconscious traitors to their people, at the very least'. He apparently spoke for a large proportion of the German National Assembly's members, for his speech ended in 'loud peals of applause that went on for some time'.<sup>12</sup> Other parliamentarians who sat on the right wing of St Paul's church were seduced by national conceit into quite other visions. In an 1848 work the Austrian deputy Karl Moering had referred to 'the Germanic element as the most numerous, physically beautiful, morally refined, intelligently pure, which best unites beauty and strength, permanency and goodness. For this reason it deserves to rule over the world'.<sup>13</sup> Viewed in retrospect, these phrases did not bode well. Clearly, segments of the movement for national unification were beginning to shed their emancipatory origins and to develop an aggressive brand of nationalism.<sup>14</sup> Although Jordan's chauvinistic speech also received the approval particularly of the liberal factions in St Paul's church, and Moering's opinions were well-received beyond the borders of the multi-ethnic Austrian state, most liberals could not adopt such notions. Admittedly, the trouble with the liberal concept of nation was that its content tended to be vague and was thus open to broad interpretations. For many liberals, the idea of nation also had an integrative function; the struggle for national unity was supposed to unite the various political positions and currents and also include the German princes. This concept was not wholly unrealistic, since monarchs such as Frederick William IV also looked to German unity as a lofty goal. The Prussian king, however, associated quite clear political objectives with 'national unity': only he and the other princes should be able to decide who would wear the imperial German crown. This excluded any substantial liberal participation in the decision on the constitutional form of German unification and on the identity of the head of state.

While the liberal idea of nation was thus also open to conservative, pre-revolutionary concepts of German unity,<sup>15</sup> the democrats' notion of national unification was directly tied to securing and expanding the political and social order that developed in the wake of the March

revolution. For the democrats even a partial sacrifice of the achievements of the revolution and of further reforms in the name of German unity was out of the question. In their view, as in that of the labour movement, it went without saying that the Poles had as much right to national and thus political autonomy as the Germans.<sup>16</sup> On this matter, the left was admittedly largely isolated in St Paul's Church and no doubt among the bourgeois public more generally. The German National Assembly rejected by a three-quarters majority their motion to 'declare the partition of Poland a disgraceful injustice' and to recognize it as 'the German people's sacred duty' to 'participate in the restoration of Poland'.<sup>17</sup>

The democratic patriotic movement for a unified German state was additionally weakened by the greatly varying importance attached to the German question by the revolutionary movements in the various states. For the democratic movement in Prussia, the call for national unity was, on the whole, only one demand among many. Here it was above all a welcome instrument in the day-to-day struggle against a strongly Prussian-flavoured conservatism.<sup>18</sup> In southern and western Germany, by contrast, the national question appears to have been a sort of focal point for the revolutionary movement, including the liberals. The reasons for this, in my view, deep-seated difference between Prussia and the south-west German middle states can only be touched on here. In south-western Germany, even before the revolution, relatively 'modern' quasi-constitutional monarchies had been established, despite strong corporate roots. Baden had had a constitution since 1818, and Württemberg since 1819. Both states had liberal electoral laws that granted the vote to relatively broad segments of the male population. For both states and their local liberal and democratic movements, national institutions, namely the German Confederation, which was dominated by the hegemonic powers of Austria and Prussia, represented the most important obstacle to more extensive reforms. For this reason, south-west German democrats and liberals placed demands for national unity in the foreground. Only unification seemed to hold out the promise of expediting the democratization of political structures in their own states. The situation in Prussia was altogether different. In the Hohenzollern monarchy external factors were not the main obstacles to political development. Here, a repressive domestic policy blocked even timid attempts to democratize society. For the Prussian democrats, at least, basic reforms in their own country had first priority. From their standpoint the political unification of the nation could only be a secondary goal.

All of these fundamental contradictions and tactical differences within the national movement in 1848 in turn made it easier for the Prussian king, Frederick William IV, to refuse the imperial crown which the German National Assembly offered him. To be sure, Frederick William IV was not opposed on principle to German unity. He had no intention, however, of wearing an imperial crown that bore the 'vile stench of the revolution of 1848'. He did not want to be crowned with 'such an illusory hoop, baked of filth and rags'.<sup>19</sup> The only imperial unification he could accept would come 'from above' – without or against the revolution.<sup>20</sup>

## V.

The heterogeneity of the social base of the revolution and the multiplicity of political currents and lines of conflict were not the only factors that determined the 'fate' of the revolution.<sup>21</sup> The revolutionary and reformist movements of the Habsburg and Hohenzollern monarchies, in particular, carried an additional handicap: they had had no opportunity before 1848 to articulate their critiques of the authorities or to engage in 'party' politics within autonomous clubs or on the parliamentary stage. This was in contrast to south-western Germany, where parliaments and party-like organizations had existed as training grounds for many years. A further burden was the overwhelming and seemingly complete initial success of March 1848. Once the old ministers abdicated and the monarchs uttered a few political promises, the revolutionaries of Vienna and Berlin believed they had attained all their objectives. The March movements intimidated the old powers, to be sure, but they failed to deprive them of real power. No far-reaching political changes were made. The superficiality of the structural alterations in turn determined the failure of the revolution. When in the summer the left discovered the importance of demanding a democratization of the army and substantial reforms in such areas as the bureaucracy and the justice system, it was already too late. The old powers had consolidated. The revolution could be carried no further, and the counter-revolution was all but unstoppable.

The revolution of 1848 ended in defeat – not only in Germany, however, but all over Europe (with the exception of Switzerland). The revolution was not, however, a complete failure. The feudal rights and bonds that still existed in the agrarian sector were largely abolished. Broad segments of the population had been profoundly

politicized. The establishment of the various political currents on a national level was also a great step towards modernity.<sup>22</sup> The emancipation of the Jews was extended and, on a formal level, at least, largely completed.<sup>23</sup> Formally, large parts of Germany and here particularly Prussia became 'constitutional states' in 1848. Many historians regard this as the greatest success of the revolution.<sup>24</sup> I take a more sceptical view. Doubtless the mere existence of a constitution is important. There is no question that the catalogue of basic rights compiled in St Paul's church and the Prussian constitutions of 1848 and 1850 were of great historical significance as models for the imperial constitutions of 1867 and 1871, the Weimar Constitution and the Basic Law of the Federal Republic. More important, however, is 'constitutional reality' and the actual functioning of a political system.

A basic problem with the Prussian constitution of December 1848, and to a lesser extent with the amended constitution of January 1850,<sup>25</sup> was that they were granted from above. Ultimately, however, the promulgation of a constitution by unilateral royal decree, and with it the possibility that the king can restrict or repeal it altogether at any time, and a 'constitutional state' are mutually exclusive. From the beginning, the constitutions equipped the monarchy with a structural predominance. The promulgation of the constitution of 5 December 1848 testifies above all to the psychological skill of influential circles. Leopold von Gerlach, one of the closest and most influential ultraconservative advisers to the Prussian King Frederick William IV, aptly summarized the Crown's intentions when he asserted that, with an eye to broadening the monarchy's social base, the crown could not and would not abolish the constitution. It was, rather, a matter of 'weakening it with substructures' and rendering it 'anti-revolutionary'.<sup>26</sup>

In the face of these so bluntly uttered intentions, which influential circles in Prussia pursued with the promulgation of the constitution, it is scarcely surprising that the most extensive liberties contained in the constitution were not matched in political practice. Instead, the basic rights guaranteed by the Prussian constitution were systematically undermined in the 1850s. In some respects, the period between 1850 and 1859 fell behind even the constitutionless pre-March period.<sup>27</sup> It was no accident that the promulgation of the constitution was accompanied by the appointment of the government official Karl Ludwig von Hinckeldey as chief constable of the Berlin police and his subsequent rise to the position of informal minister of police in Prussia. Hinckeldey, who was also one of Frederick William

IV's closest confidants, was responsible for a whole series of decrees and laws introduced in 1849 and 1850, which severely curtailed the freedoms of association, assembly and the press formally guaranteed by the constitution. Hinckeldey is known not least as the creator of the modern Prussian secret police, which covered the entire country with a tight network of informers in order to prevent the democratic movement from regaining strength.<sup>28</sup>

The Prussian monarchy created for itself a constitutional façade that included a parliament possessed of only very limited substantial rights in relation to the crown. The constitutional conflict between a liberal-influenced Prussian chamber of deputies on the one hand and William I and Bismarck on the other a decade-and-a-half later expressed this dilemma quite conspicuously. In addition, the deputies of the Prussian lower house were selected by a non-democratic suffrage. To be sure, this can be regarded to some extent as a 'bourgeois success', since the three-class voting system introduced in Prussia on 30 May 1849 accommodated (right-wing) liberal ideas by giving substantial weight to the propertied bourgeoisie and excluding the lower classes, for all intents and purposes, from political codetermination. When compared to the democratic suffrage that had been introduced for the elections to the German and Prussian National Assemblies in 1848, the three-class voting system doubtless represented a significant regression.

Viewed in retrospect, 1848 cast long shadows over the decades that followed. The defeat of the revolution lastingly strengthened the antidemocratic powers of the old regime. The experience that revolutions were possible not just in France but also in Germany and Prussia forced the traditional elites to break out of their condition of political rigidity. The ultraconservatives became consummate masters of the modern instruments of mass influence. It is no coincidence that the notorious *Kreuz-Zeitung*, a widely-distributed ultraconservative daily newspaper, was founded in 1848. In particular, however, the revolution forced the pre-bourgeois elites to form social coalitions that enabled them to maintain power for much longer than they would have if the revolution had never exerted pressure on them. In a sense, the Prussian constitutions of December 1848 and January 1850 represented the official seal of approval on the coalition between the old and new elites.

## VI.

In conclusion, I would like to mention one result of the revolution of 1848 that, as I believe, had a particularly lasting influence. The outcome of this revolution confirmed and fortified a specific political character and mentality in Germany. It can be roughly characterized as follows:

1. The defeat of the revolutionary movement corresponded with the beginning of a renaissance of 'blueblooded arrogance'. The bourgeoisie by no means relinquished its own values and cultural guidelines, but it made only a limited effort to impose them on society more generally. In this regard Prussia-Germany was, to be sure, no exception in the European context.<sup>29</sup> It is important nevertheless that the old elites' leading role in the sociocultural and especially in the political field remained unchallenged and even gained in social influence after 1849.
2. In view of the later history of Prussia and Germany it was especially unfortunate that, after the Prussian army's 1849 'successes' in Saxony, the Palatinate and Baden, military 'virtues' received a more positive response among broad segments of the population. To be sure, here too there are obvious lines of continuity reaching farther back into the past, particularly to vaunted glories of the Seven Years' War (1756–63) and the Wars of Liberation (1813–15). 1848, though, represents a missed opportunity to break with this tradition. Even the army's oath of loyalty to the constitution, which had been promised by the king, never came about. After 1849 the army was dazzlingly rehabilitated from the disgrace of 18 March 1848, and its social importance greatly increased. The ultraconservative military leadership's dream in 1848 of extending and elevating military virtues to universal social virtues in order to immunize the population against revolutionary ideas<sup>30</sup> became at least partial reality in the second half of the century. Military values, titles and modes of behaviour gained increasing approval among bourgeois civilians. Even many of those who in 1848 had made no secret of their disdain for the Prussian military, its deeply undemocratic structures and 'glorious past', changed after 1866 into uncritical and at times enthusiastic proponents of Prussian military strength.
3. The defeat of the revolutionary movement confirmed a deep-seated attitude towards the authorities in Prussia, one with roots



in the 'enlightened absolutism' of Frederick II and above all in the Prussian reforms of 1806–15, which many older people had experienced personally: the hope for a 'revolution from above'. It was, in turn, this same attitude that made Bismarck's 'white revolution' possible in the first place. With the defeat of the revolutionary movement of 1848 the opportunity to found a strong, democratic and non-authoritarian tradition in Prussia and Germany, and with it an antithesis to the subservient mentality was also lost.<sup>31</sup>

4. The striving for national unity in 1848 was combined by many, but not all people, with a nationalism that denied other nations the right to political sovereignty. Even a partially successful democratic revolution would have allowed a patriotism that respected the rights of other peoples to attain much greater influence *vis-à-vis* an arrogant and aggressive nationalism.

The failure of the German, and in this case Prussian, revolution of 1848 confirmed and heightened fateful basic attitudes. Without the experience of the defeat of the revolution, a solution of the constitutional conflict of 1862 to 1866 in Bismarck's favour would have been scarcely possible. William I – if the so-called 'case-shot prince' had even been considered a candidate for German sovereign – would not have been offered the imperial crown by the rulers of the German states, but by a parliamentary deputation. Above all, had imperial unification been accomplished from below rather than from above, the political system of imperial Germany would have borne clear democratic and constitutional characteristics. The trauma of the failed revolution 'from below', in contrast, made many democrats surrender, sooner or later, to a successful practitioner of power politics. It made them receptive to the blessings of a revolution 'from above'.

Certainly, one should not overinterpret the revolution's negative consequences. There was no direct path from 1848 to '1914' or even '1933'. A whole series of developments and events pointed German history in the direction that it actually took.<sup>32</sup> This does not mean, however, that 1848 was inconsequential. The result of the revolution of 1848 was a pseudo-constitutional Prussian monarchy, which in turn became the main constitutional as well as the political model for the German empire founded in 1871. The strong position first of the Prussian king and then of the German *Kaiser* blocked political reforms that would have cleared the way for a truly parliamentary monarchy. Reform remained backed up, despite the constitution of 1871, and

despite Bismarck's social legislation. First thwarted and then defeated, the first German revolution made a second radical political change necessary. This second democratic revolution of 1918–19 failed because of '1848' – not least because of the political characteristics that had been decisively reinforced by the first revolution. The particular tragedy of both revolutions was that their failure rendered the 'Caesarist stance'<sup>33</sup> more acceptable, and respectable. A good fourteen years after the March revolution of 1848 the first modern German 'Caesar', Otto von Bismarck, began to determine the fortunes of Prussian-German politics. A good fourteen years after the November revolution of 1918 a much more terrible 'Caesar' assumed power, whose regime would bring war, terror, and misery to all of Europe.

We should not become too fixated on this negative German tradition, though. The revolution of 1848, or, to be more precise, the left liberals, the democrats, and the early labour movement as the political currents that carried the revolution, also founded a positive tradition. They offered democratic self-confidence as an alternative to the spirit of subservience. Instead of arrogant nationalism they postulated a patriotism that respected other peoples' right to self-determination; they also showed signs of beginning to think and act in terms of a democratic Europe. In place of the pseudo-constitution promulgated by the Prussian crown they posited the concept of a parliamentary and social democracy. This tradition of the revolution of 1848 has put down strong roots in Germany since the end of the Second World War. It is to be hoped that it will continue to grow in strength in future.

## Notes

1. The concentration on developments in the cities has certain problems because three-quarters of all inhabitants of the German states at mid-century lived in the countryside. At the same time, the mainly uncoordinated and spontaneous agrarian revolts of March and April 1848 as well as later social-revolutionary movements in the countryside did not have a major impact on the revolution, at least in the German states. The revolution of 1848 remained largely urban. The best overviews of the German revolution are Wolfram Siemann, *Die Deutsche Revolution von 1848/49*, Frankfurt am Main 1985; and Dieter Hein, *Die Revolution von 1848/49*, Munich 1998. On the revolution of 1848/49 as a European phenomenon see, particularly, Jonathan Sperber, *The European Revolutions, 1848–1851. New Approaches to European History*, Cambridge 1994; Manfred Botzenhart, *1848/49: Europa im Umbruch*, Paderborn 1998; Dieter Dowe,

Heinz-Gerhard Haupt and Dieter Langewiesche (eds), *Europa 1848. Revolution und Reform*, Bonn 1998.

2. In order to offer at least a rough impression of the internal differentiation and scope of the various substrata, it may be useful to give some more figures for Berlin (for which, in contrast to most other cities, excellent statistics already existed before 1848): the (upper) middle classes or bourgeoisie (*Bürgertum*) of the Prussian capital claimed a scant 5 per cent of the Berlin population. The propertied or economic bourgeoisie (*Wirtschaftsbourgeoisie*) and higher civil servants each made up 0.6 per cent, the educated classes 2.2 per cent. Other people who belonged to the bourgeoisie in the broad sense were rich rentiers and pensioners, with 0.8 per cent, and students and others who were training for a bourgeois profession with 0.7 per cent of the city's population. The (lower) middle classes (*Mittelschichten*), approximately 12 per cent of the population, included well-off master artisans (4 per cent), middling and 'smaller' shopkeepers (1.5 per cent), self-employed people engaged in transport and the like (1.5 per cent), middle and lower civil servants and salaried employees (2.1 per cent) and the remaining rentiers and pensioners (3 per cent). The Berlin lower classes (*Unterschichten*) were also composed of four sub-groups, namely the 'proletaroid self-employed' (some 13–14 per cent of the total population), skilled labourers (37–38 per cent), unskilled labourers including most female domestic servants (approximately 27 per cent) and the subproletariat, whose numbers are very difficult to calculate, but which, according to official statistics, made up some 5 per cent of the population, a figure that is doubtless too low, however. For more on this see Rüdiger Hachtmann, *Berlin 1848. Eine Politik- und Gesellschaftsgeschichte der Revolution*, Bonn 1997, pp. 70–81. All the following details on Berlin are taken from this work.
3. My discussion here follows Manfred Botzenhart, *Deutscher Parlamentarismus in der Revolutionszeit 1848–1850*, Düsseldorf 1977, p. 117. The German National Assembly, in contrast to the Prussian National Assembly, was not formally obliged to reach an 'agreement' with the sovereigns in regard to politics or the constitution. The deputies in St Paul's church practised a *de facto* voluntary politics of agreement, however, a politics of unilateral handicaps in which they appealed at many points to the reigning monarchs, failed to incorporate the central imperial authority into a democratic parliamentary system, and created a legal stopgap, a substitute emperor in the form of the Imperial Governor (*Reichsverweser*), in the hope that the princes would at least offer their blessing after the fact.
4. On the local level, too, the bourgeois and petty bourgeois strata did their best to exclude the lower classes from political participation. This can be demonstrated particularly well for Berlin. Here, new elections to the town council were set for May 1848. The majority of town councillors in the Prussian capital decided to retain the principle introduced for the

1809 council elections, according to which only Berlin citizens were eligible to vote. These represented scarcely one-third of the city's total male population. The democratic or left-liberal minority in the city parliament proposed a motion to introduce universal, equal suffrage, but this was rejected by a large majority.

5. Resolution of the elders of the KKB ad. No. 383, 12 May 1848, Landesarchiv Berlin, Stadtarchiv, Rep. 200-01, No. 348, p. 3.
6. On this see, for example, David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley, *Mythen deutscher Geschichtsschreibung. Die gescheiterte bürgerliche Revolution von 1848*, Frankfurt am Main 1980 (published in a revised version as *The Peculiarities of German History: Bourgeois Society and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Germany*, Oxford 1984). It is senseless to construct a *Sonderweg* (for Germany) and a 'normal path' (for France or England). For the behaviour of the 'bourgeoisie' (*Bürgertum*, in many cases also used in the general sense of 'middle class') – also often an excessively inclusive category – the point in time of revolutionary events, before 1789 or after 1794, is decisive. The nightmare of a radicalization of the revolution, as it had occurred between 1792 and 1794 in France, and of the political rule of the lower classes, or at least their partial participation in power, was omnipresent for most bourgeois in 1848, whether implicitly or explicitly, and influenced their behaviour in large measure. If the German *Bürgertum* (or at least large segments of the German bourgeoisie in the narrower sense) appears to have been more 'conservative' or 'reactionary' than its English or French counterparts, this was not a matter of national character. Instead, it was a result of the fact that in the German states revolutionary situations only matured long after 1789 or 1792–94, and historical memory was thus wholly different.
7. See, particularly, Sylvia Paetschek, *Frauen und Dissens. Frauen im Deutsch-katholizismus und in den freien Gemeinden 1841–1852*, Göttingen 1990; Jörn Brederlow, *'Lichtfreunde' und 'Freie Gemeinden': Religiöser Protest und Freiheitsbewegung im Vormärz und in der Revolution von 1848/49*, Munich 1976.
8. See the figures on the social composition of the German and Prussian National Assemblies in M. Botzenhart, *Deutscher Parlamentarismus*, pp. 161 and 517. In France, in contrast, the proportional weight of the propertied or economic bourgeoisie among the deputies to the *Assemblée Nationale* was much greater. See Heinrich Best, *Die Männer von Bildung und Besitz. Struktur und Handeln parlamentarischer Führungsgruppen in Deutschland und Frankreich 1848/49*, Düsseldorf 1990, p. 59 (Table 1).
9. On the typical popular forms of protest, more generally, namely what is known in German as *Katzenmusik* (literally, cats' music), which often began with such spontaneous gatherings, see the work of E.P. Thompson, especially "'Rough Music": Le charivari anglais', in *Annales E. S. C.* 27, 1972, pp. 285–312; for Germany see, in particular, Manfred Gailus, *Straße und Brot. Sozialer Protest in den deutschen Staaten, unter besonderer Berücksichtigung Preußens 1847–1849*, Göttingen 1990, pp. 142–50. For a detailed

discussion of the political mentality, social actions, and organizational behaviour of the lower classes and (in contrast) of the bourgeoisie, cf. Hachtmann, *Berlin 1848*, pp. 478–502, and R. Hachtmann, 'Zwischen konservativer Beharrung und demokratisch-sozialistischer Utopie. Politische Einstellungen und Organisationsverhalten von Bürgertum, Mittelstand und Proletariat während der Berliner Revolution von 1848', in *Berlin in Geschichte und Gegenwart. Jahrbuch des Landesarchivs Berlin* 14, 1995, pp. 101–29.

10. The early labour movement's understanding of politics remained strongly influenced by bourgeois notions. Typically, they expressly distanced themselves from the spontaneous political forms of the unorganized lower classes and were equally and fundamentally opposed to the non-bourgeois way of life typical of the 'culture of poverty', with its emphasis on living for the moment. See Hachtmann, *Berlin 1848*, pp. 478–85.
11. To be sure, developments since the summer of 1848, in particular, demonstrated that the term 'liberalism' is too all-encompassing. In fact, liberalism as a political tendency was highly fragmented. Since the end of 1848 the various liberal trends could no longer be brought together under one umbrella; from this point forward their points of contact to neighbouring political camps often increased. It was no accident that in Prussia democrats and left-liberals on the one hand and right-wing liberals and conservatives on the other formed coalitions for the January 1849 elections to the provincial parliaments and also organized within joint associations.
12. *Stenographischer Bericht über die Verhandlungen der deutschen constituierenden Nationalversammlung zu Frankfurt a.M.*, ed. F. Wigard, Frankfurt am Main 1848–49, vol. 2, pp. 1143 and 1145 f; see also Günther Wollstein, *Das 'Großdeutschland' der Paulskirche. Nationale Ziele in der bürgerlichen Revolution 1848/49*, Düsseldorf 1977, pp. 146–9. The occasion of the debate was the partition of the mainly Polish Prussian province of Posen according to nationality, which was undertaken by the Prussian government in early June 1848 and sanctioned by a clear majority of the Frankfurt Assembly after the debate on 24 July.
13. Quoted in G. Wollstein, 'Großdeutschland', p. 270, n. 18. On the response to Moering's ideas among the deputies to the German National Assembly, see pp. 268–71.
14. On the whole, nation and nationalism possessed quite another status in the Europe of 1848–9 than they had during the revolutions of previous decades. In contrast to 1789, when the self-determination and self-assertion of the 'grande nation' vis-à-vis outside forces became a prerequisite for the success of the French revolution at home, in 1848 the various nationalisms within the European framework largely cancelled each other out, to some extent with the vigorous assistance of the old powers. The Habsburgs were particularly successful in their efforts to pit the national movements of the Croats and so forth in the

Hungarian half of the empire against the Magyar independence movement. See Sperber, *European Revolutions*, especially pp. 246 ff.

15. On the ambivalence and political function of the liberal concept of unification see, in particular, Reinhard Rürup, *Deutschland im 19. Jahrhundert 1815–1871*, Göttingen 1984, pp. 184–5.
16. Many democrats, though, were not completely immune to the nationalist frenzy, as clearly evidenced by the debates and resolutions of the German National Assembly on the South Tyrolian and 'Bohemian-Moravian Question'. The democratic deputies could not bring themselves to grant the Italians and Czechs, who represented the majority of the population in both regions (or in individual districts), the complete national sovereignty they desired.
17. Ernst Rudolf Huber (ed.), *Dokumente zur deutschen Verfassungsgeschichte*, vol. 1, 3rd edn, Stuttgart 1978, p. 271.
18. This can be demonstrated at least for the cases of Cologne and Berlin. On Cologne, see Marcel Seyppel, *Die demokratische Gesellschaft in Köln 1848/49. Städtische Gesellschaft und Parteienentstehung während der Bürgerlichen Revolution*, Cologne 1992, pp. 81 and 206. On Berlin, see R. Hachtmann, *Berlin 1848*, pp. 683–4. The labour movement, in contrast – at the latest after the June battles in Paris, which were interpreted as the beginning of European class warfare – began to emphasize 'internationalist' goals over efforts at national unification.
19. Letter from Frederick William IV to the Prussian ambassador to England, Karl Josias von Bunsen, 6 December 1848, quoted in Leopold von Ranke, *Aus dem Briefwechsel Friedrich Wilhelms IV. mit Bunsen*, Leipzig 1873, p. 234.
20. On the Prussian politics of unification, which pursued just this goal, and then failed because of the intervention of the great powers Austria and Russia, see the overview by Wolfram Siemann, *Gesellschaft im Umbruch. Deutschland 1849–1871*, Frankfurt am Main 1990, pp. 26–36.
21. A further decisive factor was Germany's fragmentation into numerous smaller and larger states, which, ultimately, seriously weakened the revolutionary movements. Political decentralization and the multitude of armies (which also remained largely resistant to revolutionary 'temptations') allowed the old powers to catch their breaths and regenerate their forces. To be sure, the political and military decentralization typical of Germany enabled the revolutionaries to win some victories in individual arenas, but at the same time it also prevented them from maintaining them in the longer term. Where one centre of action was weakened, the other remained stable.
22. One should certainly not overestimate this aspect, though. On the whole the various political currents managed only to a limited extent to establish organizations on a national level. The early labour movement was the most successful with its Workers' Alliance (*Arbeiterverbrüderung*) founded at the beginning of September 1848. The democrats were far



less successful; the Central Committee of German Democrats (*Central-Ausschuß der deutschen Demokraten*) elected in June 1848 remained a top-heavy organization that barely managed to paper over the internal heterogeneity and local eccentricities of the democratic clubs. The Central March Club (*Zentralmärzverein*), which had a large membership, was founded at the end of 1848 under the massive pressure of counter-revolution, at a time when the revolution's defeat was a foregone conclusion. The liberal-constitutional clubs were even less successful than the democrats in their efforts to coordinate at a national level.

23. Here, in particular, though, theoretical rights continued to coexist with a frequently very restrictive practice. On the emancipation movement during the revolution and the significance of 1848 for the long-term process of emancipation, see Reinhard Rürup, 'The European Revolutions of 1848 and Jewish Emancipation', in Werner E. Mosse, Arnold Paucker and Reinhard Rürup (eds), *Revolution and Evolution: 1848 in German-Jewish History*, Tübingen 1982, especially pp. 17–22 and 52–3; and Reinhard Rürup, 'Der Fortschritt und seine Grenzen. Die Revolution von 1848 und die europäischen juden', in D. Dowe, H.-G. Haupt and D. Langewiesche (eds), *Europa 1848*, pp. 985–1005.
24. See (to name only those syntheses that also summarize the various currents of historiography on the revolution) Thomas Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte 1800–1866. Bürgerwelt und starker Staat*, Munich 1983, p. 670; and Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, vol. 2: *Von der Reformära zur industriellen und politischen 'Deutschen Doppelrevolution' 1815–1848/49*, Munich 1987, p. 778.
25. Formally, the constitution was agreed upon by Crown and Parliament between July 1849 and January 1850, as had been intended in April 1848. In fact, however, the constitutional decree of December 1848 was merely legalized after the fact.
26. Leopold von Gerlach, *Denkwürdigkeiten aus dem Leben von Leopold von Gerlach. Nach seinen Aufzeichnungen hrsg. von seiner Tochter*, vol. 1, Berlin 1891, p. 628.
27. Dirk Blasius has provided impressive evidence of this for the important area of the justice system in his *Geschichte der politischen Kriminalität 1800–1980*, Frankfurt am Main 1983, pp. 41–53. On the 'Age of Reaction' more generally see the overview in Siemann, *Gesellschaft im Umbruch*, pp. 32–83.
28. Admittedly, Hinckeldey also contributed much to the creation of a modern infrastructure in Berlin by reorganizing and expanding poor relief, street-cleaning, the fire brigade, etc. On Hinckeldey's role between 1848 and 1856 see Wolfram Siemann, 'Deutschlands Ruhe, Sicherheit und Ordnung'. *Die Anfänge der politischen Polizei 1806–1866*, Tübingen 1985, pp. 343–96.
29. See, in particular, Jürgen Kocka's summary in the introduction to J. Kocka (ed.), *Bürgertum im 19. Jahrhundert. Deutschland im europäischen Vergleich*, vol. 1, Munich 1988, pp. 65–8.

30. This was formulated with particular clarity by Gustav von Griesheim, the *éminence grise* in the Prussian Ministry of War and one of the most influential military men in 1848, in his treatise *Die deutsche Zentralgewalt und die Preussische Armee*, Berlin 1848. See, above all, Manfred Hettling, 'Bürger oder Soldaten? Kriegsdenkmäler 1848–1854 und die Mentalität der Gegenrevolution', in Reinhart Koselleck and Michael Jeismann (eds), *Der politische Totenkult. Kriegerdenkmäler in der Moderne*, Munich 1994, pp. 165 ff; Manfred Messerschmidt, 'Die preussische Armee während der Revolution in Berlin 1848', in M. Messerschmidt, *Militärgeschichtliche Aspekte der Entwicklung des deutschen Nationalstaates*, Düsseldorf 1988, pp. 56 ff; Gordon A. Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, Oxford 1955, pp. 112 ff; Rüdiger Hachtmann, 'Die Potsdamer Militärrevolte vom 12. September 1848: Warum die preussische Armee dennoch ein zuverlässiges Herrschaftsinstrument der Hohenzollern blieb', in *Militärgeschichtliche Mitteilungen* 57, 1998, pp. 333–69; Sabrina Müller, *Soldaten in der deutschen Revolution von 1848/49*, Paderborn 1999.
31. In this respect the difference between Germany and France in particular is significant. To be sure, the French revolution of 1848 also failed. (The presidency and empire of Napoleon III was certainly a modern form of restoration.) The critiques of the authorities and the democratic, anti-authoritarian traditions that had underlain the French revolutions of 1789 to 1799 and (to a limited extent) 1830 were by no means interrupted, let alone reversed by this defeat.
32. On the *Sonderweg* (special path) debate, see, among others, Jürgen Kocka, 'German History before Hitler: The Debate about the German Sonderweg', in *Journal of Contemporary History* 23, 1988, pp. 3–16; Richard J. Evans, *Rethinking German History. Nineteenth-Century Germany and the Origins of the Third Reich*, London 1987, pp. 96 ff.
33. The term (coined with William II in mind) is used in Martin Broszat, 'Der Zweite Weltkrieg: Ein Krieg der "alten" Eliten, der Nationalsozialisten oder der Krieg Hitlers?', in M. Broszat and Klaus Schwabe (eds), *Die deutschen Eliten und der Weg in den zweiten Weltkrieg*, Munich 1989, pp. 33 ff.