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Joshua D. Teixeira is currently finishing his senior year at the University of California, Merced, and is postured for a bachelor's degree in history with a concentration in world history and a minor in political science. He has been active in college government and youth programs. He has always held a passion for history and decided to pursue history as a field of study while attending Modesto Junior College. Later, he became interested in military history, but not has a particular interest in Prussian history. Of particular interest was Carl von Clausewitz, a military theorist, and his writing *On War*. Joshua's motto is highlighted in the words of Clausewitz, "Never forget that no military has ever become great without audacity. If the leader is filled with high ambition and if he pursues his aims with audacity and strength of will, he will reach them in spite of all obstacles."



Barricades in Berlin: 1848 and the Road to Constitutionalism

Josh Teixeira



Figure 1. *The Frederic Street Barricade, Berlin, 18 March 1848* http://www.allposters.com/-sp/The-Frederic-Street-Barricade-Berlin-18-March-1848-Posters_i9119926_.htm

I. Introduction*

The year 1848 gripped the continent of Europe and initiated significant historical change. Prussia was caught in events that one historian named the “year of revolution” and saw the bloodiest uprising of all the countries that experienced revolution in 1848.¹ As can be seen in Figure 1, the protest would cause many people to build barricades in an attempt to reduce any further violence. Prussia had one of the most absolutist monarchies of Europe during the nineteenth century. For the authority of King Frederick William IV (1795-1861) to be challenged was unheard of, especially from the peasants and lower nobility. The peasantry and lower nobility comprised the majority of the main social strata that took part in the revolution in Berlin, the capital of Prussia. The revolution that started on March 18 with mass protest and bloodshed ended with a constitution imposed by the monarchy on December 5, 1848. This constitution was imposed by Frederick William to appease the moderate liberals and peasantry, thus effectively destroying the numerical strength the radical liberals possessed at the outbreak of the revolution in Berlin.

To analyze the revolution in Berlin, this paper will address theoretical responses and follow “revolution theory.” In revolution theory, the process generally proceeds with a call for constitutionalism by dissatisfied citizens of the state, then the radicalization of those revolting, followed by a reactionary force which finally stops or weakens the revolution.² Secondly, the events of the revolution that occurred in Berlin will be explored through a socio-cultural and political lens. By doing so it will demonstrate how the events that took place ultimately led to a

* This work here is a sample of a much larger work conducted in a class titled Capstone Seminar, where all senior history majors are required write a 25-30 page research project.

¹ Mike Rapport, *1848: Year of Revolution* (New York: Basic Books, 2008).

² Crane Brinton, *The Anatomy of Revolution* (1938, Reprint; New York: Vintage Books, 1957), 277.

constitution that the liberals of Prussia strived for. Finally, we will explore the aftermath of the revolution: the establishment of the National Assembly (the Prussian Parliament) and the reactionary forces that ended the revolution, especially when the king imposed the constitution of 1848. The revised Constitution of the Kingdom of Prussia of 1850 remained in force until the unification of Germany in 1871, with slight modification. In short, had the revolution in Berlin not occurred in 1848, a constitution would not have been granted by King Frederick William IV, due to the absolutist nature of his reign.

II. The Lead Up to the Revolution

Historians who study nineteenth-century pre-unification Germany have attributed the antecedents of the Revolutions of 1848 to France igniting the revolution in Prussia, specifically in Berlin.³ Along with the French spark of the revolution in Berlin, social conditions helped to foment the revolution. It was during this period of social change that Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Frederick Engels (1820-1895) wrote *The Communist Manifesto* in February 1848. *The Communist Manifesto* was not widely read by the masses in the mid-nineteenth-century but would become widely read and discussed in the twentieth-century.⁴ It was not Marx and Engels who influenced the revolutions as they had hoped but rather the French who would have the largest impact.

³ Rapport, 57.; Hans Joachim Hahn, *The 1848 Revolutions in German-Speaking Europe* (Harlow, England: Pearson Education, 2001), 46.; Christopher Clark, *Iron Kingdom: The Rise and Downfall of Prussia, 1600-1947* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 2006), 468.

⁴ Paul Brians, "Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels: *The Communist Manifesto* (1848)," in Reading About the World, http://public.wsu.edu/~brians/world_civ/worldcivreader/world_civ_reader_2/marx.html (accessed November 10, 2012).

According to Professor Hans J. Hahn, the French Revolution of 1789 had a dramatic influence on the social changes of Europe, especially on the German-speaking areas in which Napoleon would later conquer.⁵ The revolutionary spirit of France in 1789 was still part of the social memory of Prussians, when Prussia was on the verge of war with France. During the age of Napoleon, Prussia had undergone reforms to help combat Napoleon. After Napoleon's defeat, Prussia kept up with these reforms for only a short period thereafter. The liberals in Prussia hoped that in 1848 the government of Prussia would revert to reforms as seen in 1813.⁶ These liberals, like the liberals in other German princedoms, were comprised of the educated, professional lower nobility and gentry that envisioned a constitution with universal male suffrage and pushed for German Unification.⁷ This was a time during which hierarchy mattered a great deal because those of noble status were given governmental posts—a system where meritocracy was not fully implemented into all levels of government. To the liberals, when war was less likely, reform also became unlikely. The only possible avenue toward socio-political change was by the support of the masses through revolution.

These reforms the liberals strived for looked very unlikely because of the level of opposition faced by Frederick William and his conservative ministers. Frederick William was under the mindset of the divine right of kings, where he believed “all of the doctrines of liberalism were pernicious outgrowths of the French Revolution [of 1789], that apocalyptic horror which had disturbed the divine order.”⁸ Even with this mentality, the social, economic, and political conflict did not go unnoticed and undiagnosed by Frederick William's ministers. Frederick William received numerous petitions from his ministers to continue the reforms of

⁵Ibid, 1.

⁶ Ibid, 50.

⁷Taylor, 69.

⁸ Gordon A. Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army 1640-1945* (1955; reprint, London: Oxford UP, 1964), 86.

1807-1813 by granting a constitution and was warned that the general mood of the people wanted such.⁹ These petitions by his ministers would, however, prove to be problematic because Frederick William expressed that these petitions were on the verge of being treasonous and he would never give a written constitution.¹⁰

When the United Diet first assembled in Berlin on April 11, 1847, in his opening address, Frederick William expressed his abhorrence toward a constitution and those who would try to push for a constitution. In this address, Frederick William stated that:

No power on earth will ever force me to transform the natural relationship ... between prince and people into a conventional, constitutional one; neither now nor ever will I permit a written piece of paper to force itself, like some second providence, between our Lord God in heaven and this land, to rule us with its paragraphs and, through them, to replace the ancient sacred loyalty.¹¹

This demonstrates that Frederick William was not willing to budge on any constitutional possibility that Prussia may have had. Frederick William dictated to the United Diet that they should resist all forms of liberalism because they represented the different estates of the kingdom—the aristocracy, the bourgeoisie, and the peasantry—not people as a whole and to give into liberal ideas was un-Germanic.¹² This is the point in which the liberals identified that Frederick William had no intention of any constitutional compromise, and any form of progress would have to be done without the help of the king. This is when real opposition to Frederick William and the Prussian government solidified.

A phenomenon that enabled the liberals to direct the social unrest of the peasantry toward the monarchy and its government was economic woes compounded by famine during 1846 and

⁹ Ibid, 87.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Fritz Hartung, *Deutsche Verfassungsgeschichte vom 15. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart* [German Constitutional History of Fifteenth-Century to the Present] (Liepzig, 1922), 151. Found in Craig, 88.

¹² Craig, 88.

1847.¹³ Mike Rapport explains that in 1848 Berlin had a population of roughly 400,000 people—6,000 paupers where on some sort of state assistance, 4,000 beggars, 10,000 prostitutes, and 10,000 vagabonds. Rapport then goes on to estimate that the poor or those living outside the margins of society outnumbered the burghers (established middle class) in Berlin by a ratio of two to one.¹⁴ In the years of 1846 and 1847, Europe faced a mass agrarian crisis as a result of numerous crop failures, including wheat and other essential crops.¹⁵

The most infamous of the crop failures during this period was the Irish Potato Famine—potatoes also failed in Prussia as well as most of Europe. The price of potatoes had increased so much that in 1847 the people of Prussia took to arms in rebellion, which foreshadowed the events of March 18 and 19, 1848. This outbreak of armed resistance became known as the “Potato Rebellion,” which lasted for three days until order was restored by the military.¹⁶ The Potato Rebellion occurred when the United Diet first met under Frederick William, where the population of Berlin attacked and plundered shops, market stands, and potato merchants, in order to demonstrate their dissatisfaction with the high prices of staple foods.¹⁷ Along with the crop failures and famines, the prices of other staple foods increased so much that a German laborer would make enough money after a day’s work to purchase two five pound loaves of bread in 1835; but, in 1847, the same day’s work would only purchase half that amount.¹⁸ With the price of food doubling, poverty and famine grew more widespread. This also led to further unemployment which resulted in further debts on the population, where the poorest were hit the

¹³ Hahn, 51.

¹⁴ Rapport, 35; Vagabonds are people of no particular occupation but were able to find work. Vagabonds were a problem in European society because it did not allow for stability, one of the cornerstones of civilization in the European view.

¹⁵ Hahn, 51-2.

¹⁶ Craig, 91.

¹⁷ Clark, 456.

¹⁸ Craig, 52.

hardest.¹⁹ These social issues were compounded by the knowledge of political change in France which gave rise to the hope that such change would be possible within Berlin.

III. The Barricades are Raised

News of the French February Revolution reached Prussia and excitement circulated around the Berlin liberals, both moderate and radical. When news reached Berlin on February 28, 1848, that King Louis-Philippe had abdicated his throne, Berliners poured into the streets to see if any more information on the events could be located; the political clubs, where political discourse was discussed, was one of the major outlets for information on France and other major metropolitan areas that were also experiencing revolution.²⁰ Karl Varnhagen von Ense (1785-1858), a liberal writer and diarist who lived in Berlin during the outbreak of the revolution, wrote in his diary that information about current events was so highly sought after that “[w]hoever managed to get his hands on a new paper had to climb on to a chair and read the contents aloud.”²¹ Not only were the people of Berlin curious about the events occurring elsewhere but people of the surrounding areas around Berlin started to pour in. With the growing number of people in Berlin combined with the social issues and the news of France, clashes of violence were bound to happen.²²

Frederick William became concerned with the mass protest building along with the minor violence that ensued after the protests which had been occurring for the last couple of days. Ense

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Clark, 468.

²¹ Karl Varnhagen von Ense, “Darstellung des Jahres 1848” (written in autumn of 1848), in Konrad Feilchenfeld (ed.), *Karl August Varnhagen von Ense. Tageblätter* (5 vols., Frankfurt/Main, 1994), vol. 4, *Biographien, Aufsätze, Skizzen, Fragmente*, pp. 685-734, here p. 724, found in Clark, 468.

²² Taylor, 70-1.

highlights this violence in an entry from his diary dated March 15, 1848, that “General von Pfuell admitted that last night too many people have been cut to pieces, . . . people had found a corpse yesterday evening, the blood stains on the road were visible, and they had erected barricades.”²³ So, to ease the tensions, Frederick William agreed on March 17 to publish royal patents that declared the abolition of censorship and the introduction of a constitution.²⁴ On March 18, however, a mass demonstration outside the Palace Square was planned, yet it was too late to turn back the crowd. Upon hearing the great news issued by Frederick William, the crowd grew joyful and cheered for their king’s presence.²⁵ Frederick William along with his advisors made their way to the balcony that overlooked the Palace Square. After the king showed himself to the cheering crowd, Prime Minister von Bodenschwingh (1794-1854) stepped forward to address the crowd of Frederick William’s wishes,

The king wishes freedom of the press to prevail! The king wishes that the United Diet be called immediately! The king wishes that a constitution on the most liberal basis should encompass all German lands! The king wishes that there should be a German national flag! The king wishes that all custom turn pikes should fall! The king wishes that Prussia place itself at the head of the movement!”²⁶

Christopher Clark points out, most of the crowd could not hear the speech and pamphlets were circulated where the crowd became euphoric.²⁷ Once the joy started to set in, the crowd began to realize that troops were just outside the square and the mood started to change toward the worse— unprecedented violence for the Revolutions of 1848 was on the horizon.

Clark points out that even though the people were afraid of the troops they were leery of them because it was a day in which the people thought that they were praising their king for the

²³ Ense, 282.

²⁴ Clark, 470.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid, 472.

²⁷ Ibid.

concessions so the sight of the troops alarmed the crowd.²⁸ The people who gathered at the densely packed Palace Square in jubilation now believed that they had been deceived by the king and the army. These people had become afraid of the presence of the troops because they feared for their lives, yet at the same time they wanted to stand for the liberties that energized their protest. These people who believed themselves backed into a corner, turned to resist and taunt the troops, which signaled to the troops that a riot was soon to ensue.

The densely packed crowd in the Palace Square began to panic and a few attempted to leave to safety. Because they knew the situation was going to turn violent, they demanded in a chant “soldiers out.”²⁹ Those at the edges of the crowd were the most fearful because they were most likely to suffer injury or death if fighting began. The crowd was also particularly fearful that they would be pushed into troops from the people behind them which would be taken as an attack and an instigation of a fight.³⁰ When the situation started to get out of control, Frederick William changed the command of the forces in Berlin from General Ernst von Pfuel (1779-1866), who was somewhat sympathetic to the revolution, to the more war-hawkish General Karl von Prittwitz (1790-1871) who ordered that the square be cleared immediately by the troops by stating that “an end be put to the scandalous situation prevailing there.”³¹ Prittwitz, however, did not want to see any loss of life so the orders to the cavalry was to push back at a walking pace with swords remaining sheathed. This peaceful disbursement did not work and the only way the crowd was eventually disbursed was when the cavalry charged the crowd with sword raised as if to strike.³²

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid, 472.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Prittwitz, found in Clark, 472.

³² Clark, 472.

The charge by the cavalry not only sparked frustration and riot by the people in the square but also by the people of Berlin who believed that their king, or at least the army, had turned on the peaceful protestors. News of the events at the Palace Square spread like wildfire throughout Berlin and barricades started to go up all across the city. Ense wrote that it was “[s]uggested in my neighborhood to quickly build barricades with zeal, I saw it all to work...”³³ These barricades were an attempt to keep the troops out and reduce the casualties. Ense analyzed the situation by noting that “had a civil defense already existed, they would not have allowed the barricades, but for now everybody helped the honorable men and women [build the barricades].”³⁴ The rising of barricades were so important to the people that it did not matter the distance of the troops from the barricades that even “[i]n sight of the troops they went on with the work undisturbed...”³⁵ To protect themselves from the soldiers, the civilians started to build barricades along the narrow roads of Berlin with whatever material they could get their hands on (i.e. tables, chairs, and any other movable objects that could be used as a road block), but this only intensified the situation (see Figure 1 for an illustration of the event). The troops had amassed their offensive but the people were willing to put up a fight. “While the fighters here are crowded together, by individual bands of infantry and cavalry, they were rejected by stones, by rifle and pistol shots; the barricade on Behren Street had not been properly filled, and a detachment of infantry was able to penetrate the wall...”³⁶ The incident in the palace square took place in the afternoon and by the evening of March 18 and the early morning of March 19 more clashes would be seen.

³³ Ense, 290-91.

³⁴ Ibid, 291.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid, 293.

The evening of March 18 and the morning of the 19 was a continuous battle for control of Berlin. Again, Ense records the events of the revolution: “When evening came and it was getting dark, the general battle was only the more violent and terrible. The cannons thundered now regulated in consequence, continually the crack of gunfire was the strongest, the preponderance of the troops seemed not to be doubted anymore.”³⁷ The barricades became the focal point for all of the fighting, a pattern seen all across Berlin, with the infantry advancing on the barricades.³⁸ Just before midnight on March 18, Prittwitz informed Frederick William that most of Berlin was under the military’s control and a further advance would be nearly impossible. Prittwitz suggested to Frederick William that the troops should be withdrawn from the city, encircle Berlin and bombard the city into submission.³⁹ With this tactic the troops seemed to have pushed the protestors back and cleared the street where it appeared that the troops were to regain control of Berlin.

On March 18 and 19, 1848, the most bloodshed was spilled on these two days, all the days of the revolution in Berlin; in fact, in just these two days, more deaths would occur in Berlin than any other area that was experiencing revolution, from start to finish.⁴⁰ The number of deaths in these two days ranged from 400 (300 civilians and 100 soldiers and officers) to 900 (800 civilians and 100 soldiers and officers).⁴¹ The bloodshed was great and the events of March 18 and 19 were more of a mini-war than a revolution in comparison to that of the other countries experiencing revolution.

³⁷ Ibid, 293.

³⁸ Clark, 473.

³⁹ Ibid, 473-4

⁴⁰ Clark, 475.

⁴¹ Ibid, 475; Hahn, 93-4; Each authors account is given respectively above: Clark accounting 400 and Hahn accounting for 900 deaths.

This revolution in Berlin was not just rebellion by dissatisfied people without direction. The most important issues that the liberals called for was a constitution and unification of Germany.⁴² The constitution that was called for during the revolution (1848) would be granted later in the year, whereas the unification of Germany would not occur until 1871. For the liberals, the constitutional question was the only way to liberate the people of Prussia; they called for universal male suffrage, a Prussian Parliament to meet regularly, and a declaration of the rights of the Prussian citizen.

IV. The Constitution on the Most Liberal Basis

After the violence of March 18 and 19, 1848, Frederick William gave into the revolution. Frederick William had ordered the soldiers out of Berlin by an address to the revolutionaries, requesting “[r]eturn to peace, clear the barricades that still stand..., and I give you my Royal Word that all streets and squares will be cleared of troops, and the military occupation reduced to a few necessary buildings.”⁴³ Frederick William had given in, but he would seize back control without raising too much alarm and risk reigniting the revolution. Frederick William and his ministers then left Berlin to Potsdam, a city just a few miles south-west of Berlin, to deal with the revolution, appointing a provisional government, the United Diet, which acted as a quasi-

⁴² The argument of this essay is constitutionalism, not unification but for more information on German Unification look at these sources: Christopher Clark, *Iron Kingdom: The Rise and Downfall of Prussia, 1600-1947* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 2006), chapters 15 and 16; A. J. P. Taylor, *The Course of German History* (1945; reprint, London: University Paper Backs, 1964), chapters 6 and 7; Geoffery Wawro, *The Franco-Prussian War: The German Conquest of France in 1870-1871* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003), whole book; and Theodore S. Hamerow, *The Social Foundations of German Unification, 1858-1871* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1972), whole book.

⁴³ Karl Ludwig von Prittwitz, *Berlin 1848. Das Erinnerungswerk des Generalleutnants Karl Ludwig von Prittwitz und andere Quellen zur Berliner Märzrevolution und zur Geschichte Preussens um die Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts* [*Berlin 1848 The Lieutenant General Karl Ludwig Prittwitz and other sources to destroy the Berlin March Revolution and the History of Prussia in the mid-19th Century*], ed. Gerd Heinerich (Berlin, 1985), 259, found in Clark, 474.

parliament.⁴⁴ Under this new government, the Civil Guard, was established to act in the place of the withdrawn army to preserve the peace of Berlin. It was through this new government that Frederick William would take back control of his kingdom.

As Frederick William retreated to Potsdam on March 25, he met with his military advisors and declared that “I have come to speak with you, in order to prove to the Berliners that they need expect no reactionary strike from Potsdam.”⁴⁵ This was detrimental to the prestige of the Prussian army and, of course, not to be the whole truth, because for now Frederick William appeared to separate himself from the military and align himself to the revolutionary cause. However, the military failed to realize that Frederick William had not truly abandoned them because his concessions were merely verbal.⁴⁶ Frederick William’s pro-revolutionary stance seemed as genuine when he appointed the liberal Gottfried Ludolph Camphausen (1803-1890) as head of the National Assembly along with other liberals that were adamant constitutionalists who admired the British governmental system.⁴⁷

The National Assembly replaced the United Diet as the national parliamentary apparatus of the Prussian government in May, 1848. At the beginning of April, the Second United Diet was called by Prime Minister Camphausen where they passed laws that called for an election to constitute the National Assembly which would act as a unicameral body of about 400 members.⁴⁸ In May, the elections were to be held. These elections were held by universal male suffrage, as long as he was over twenty-four years of age, lived in the same place for a minimum of six months, and was not on any form of public assistance.⁴⁹ This election was very liberal,

⁴⁴ Hahn, 96.

⁴⁵ Prittwitz, 440-1, found in Clark, 477.

⁴⁶ Craig, 107.

⁴⁷ Hahn, 97; Craig, 108.

⁴⁸ Craig, 110.

⁴⁹ Clark, 478.

considering the historical context; the election process was partly a misnomer in comparison to the contemporary American political system. Instead of electing representatives to go to the National Assembly directly, these elections worked more similar to an electoral college, where the voter would elect people who would then in turn choose the people to go to the National Assembly. The May Elections, as it became known, is considered liberal because about one-sixth elected were artisans or peasants, a fact that Clark points out, was by far a greater percentage than would be seen in other post-revolutionary parliaments.⁵⁰

In the process of resignations by the liberal ministers, from May to November, Frederick William slowly started to replace the National Assembly heads with more conservative ministers. Under the Camphausen ministry, Camphausen tried to ensure that Prussia would remain on liberal principles but he ran into bitter struggles with Frederick William and his group of conservative advisors, known as the camarilla. The National Assembly, under Camphausen, produced a hastily drawn constitution. This made Frederick William very unhappy. Frederick William responded by including amendments to the draft constitution where he included that he was king by God's grace alone, going back to his adamant belief in the divine right of kings.⁵¹ Frederick William also included that he had exclusive command of the army and that this constitution was more of an agreement between him and his subjects rather than rule through the will of the people, as some of the moderate and radical liberals wanted to believe.⁵² With this troubled climate in the National Assembly of wanting more than Frederick William was willing to give, Camphausen resigned on June 20, 1848.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Clark, 479.

⁵² Ibid.

Camphausen was replaced by Rudolf von Auerswald (1795-1866) as Prime Minister of the National Assembly.⁵³ Auerswald understood the mood in the National Assembly but was fearful that disclosure of Frederick William's true views might lead to further radicalization by its members.⁵⁴ Frederick William had no confidence in the National Assembly as long as they still pursued the campaign against the army.⁵⁵ The Auerswald ministry issued a new draft of the constitution where it limited Frederick William's ability to block legislation passed in the National Assembly. However, this only led to polarization within the National Assembly and the constitutional question remained unanswered.⁵⁶ The draft constitution did not pass and Frederick William became angry with Auerswald. Not wanting to become more involved in the conflict between the National Assembly and the king, Auerswald resigned on September 10, 1848.⁵⁷

General Pfuel replaced Auerswald as Prime Minister to the surprise and delight of the liberals. Pfuel had been sympathetic to the revolution even though he did not always agree with the revolutionaries' goals. What also played into the fact of excitement to his appointment was that Pfuel, out of the conservatives that Frederick William had to pick from, was a good choice because he was not a hardline conservative. Pfuel, however, would not be a successful mediator between the National Assembly and Frederick William.⁵⁸ So, on November 1, 1848, General von Pfuel resigned as Prime Minister and Count Frederick William von Brandenburg (1792-1850) became the new Prime Minister of the National Assembly.⁵⁹

Frederick William's move to re-control his kingdom is illustrated by the appointment of Brandenburg as minister of the National Assembly on November 1, 1848. Brandenburg was the

⁵³ Craig, 115.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Clark, 480.

⁵⁷ Craig, 116.

⁵⁸ Clark, 480-1.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 481.

king's uncle, the former commander of the VI Corps in Breslau, and his nomination was favored by the conservative circles in Prussia, especially that of the camarilla, and marks the beginning of the reactionary movement in Prussia.⁶⁰ On November 9, Brandenburg appeared before the National Assembly and declared that it would disband until November 27, 1848. In the meanwhile, on November 11, martial law was declared in Berlin where the Civil Guard was disbanded, liberal newspapers were banned, and political clubs closed.⁶¹ Surprisingly after the events of March 18 and 19, 1848, the people of Berlin did not seem to mind this counter-revolutionary action by Brandenburg based on the lack of any real protest by the people.⁶² Frederick William had successfully driven the wedge between the National Assembly and the people of Prussia. Then on November 27, when the National Assembly reconvened, Brandenburg dispersed the Assembly again and did not give a date of reconvening, to which, on December 5, the National Assembly was formally dissolved on the same day that Frederick William issued, by imposition, the Constitution of the Kingdom of Prussia. Prussia was now a constitutional monarchy, rather more of an absolutist constitutional monarchy, where little had changed for Frederick William.

This new constitution contained liberal principles and people of Prussia, as a whole, were content with it. Gordon A. Craig notes that at the onset of the constitution it repudiated all signs of popular sovereignty and reaffirmed the principle of the divine right of kings.⁶³ One reason that the moderate liberals were satisfied with the constitution was that it ensured equality of all citizens, illustrated in Article 4 that “[a]ll Prussians shall be equal before the law. Class privileges shall not be permitted. Public offices, subject to the conditions imposed by law, shall

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Craig, 120.

⁶³ Ibid, 121.

be uniformly open to all who are competent to hold them.”⁶⁴ This article is significant because this was a reform that the liberals had attempted to attain. The constitution also granted the freedom of religion which stated that the “[f]reedom of religious confession of association in religious societies..., and the common exercise of religion in private and public, is guaranteed.”⁶⁵ Three articles dealing with censorship were included in the constitution as a result of the revolution: Article 27 allowed for the freedom of speech, Article 29 allowed for the freedom of assembly, and Article 30 allowed for the freedom of association.⁶⁶ This constitution did not give the liberals everything that they had wanted and was not “of the most liberal basis” as the king had promised on March 18, 1848, but the people in general were content with what they received in the constitution because it was more than they had prior to the outbreak of revolution in the early months of 1848. Interestingly, a couple of years later, in 1851, Marx wrote a set of treatises, analyzing, to his dissatisfaction, the revolution of 1848. Marx notes that “[t]he ‘powers that were’ before the hurricane of 1848 are again the ‘powers that be’...”⁶⁷ This is a powerful phrase because it analyzes, accurately, the outcome of the revolutions of 1848.

V. Conclusion

The revolution was over and Frederick William emerged the victor because he was able to regain control of Berlin as well as the rest of Prussia by imposing a constitution to his liking, rather than to the specific liking of the liberals. Value judgments such as winners and losers of

⁶⁴ *Constitution of the Kingdom of Prussia*, title 2, art. 4. Found in Fredrick William and James Harvey Robinson, “Supplement: Constitution of the Kingdom of Prussia,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 5:8 (1894), 27

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, title 2, art. 12. Found in *Ibid*, 28.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, title 2, art. 27; title 2, art. 29; title 2, art. 30. Found in *Ibid*, 31-2.

⁶⁷ Karl Marx, *Revolution and Counter-Revolution or Germany in 1848*, ed. Eleanor Marx Aveling, (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1951), 1.

this kind are often difficult to assess, especially since each side came away with something. For the liberals, slight victory was achieved because they received a constitution at the end of 1848, even though it did not contain the full ideas that they had envisioned. As for Frederick William, he was able to hold on to his absolutist role, if somewhat weakened, by usurping the liberals and even more so for the radical momentum by imposing a constitution on Prussia. The population of Prussia, as a whole, seemed to be pleased with the outcome of the revolution, namely the constitution. This satisfaction with the constitution resulted in the unwillingness to continue the revolution, which effectively eliminated the main fighting force behind the revolution. Although change did occur, it was Frederick William that was able to control the path of change.

This revolution followed the pattern that would be predicted using Brinton's model. The liberals of both sides used the social conditions to direct the unrest to put political pressure upon the king. When the moderate and radical liberals received concessions from Frederick William, the moderate liberals gained power until the radical liberals were able to gain a majority in the National Assembly. These radical liberals pushed more than Frederick William was willing to concede and caused the counter-revolution by Frederick William and his reactionary forces, thus putting an end the revolution.

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