

CHAPTER THREE

The Revolutions of 1848-9

From Spring to Autumn

European revolution was widespread in 1848, but not universal. Revolution did not break out in the backward east, in Russia and the Ottoman Empire, nor in the most advanced western areas of Britain, Belgium and the Netherlands. Its effects were mainly felt in the areas that were, in more than just a geographical sense, in between: by regimes that were neither liberal nor simply repressive, in societies that were no longer predominantly agrarian but in which industry had not yet established itself. In other words, it was the parts of Europe most obviously in transition, politically and socially, which proved the most explosive. Looking back on events three years later, the democrat Victor von Unruh put his finger on this point: 'We live in transitional times. The old has not yet been overcome, the new is still being born.'¹ Outside France, where 1789 and 1830 had bequeathed a powerful revolutionary tradition, the events of 1848-9 had their greatest impact in the states of the German Confederation and the non-German lands of the Habsburgs, including Italy, Bohemia and Hungary. The uneven development in this part of Europe gave the revolution its force, but also created the fault lines along which it spent itself.

Revolution in Germany was the result of several superimposed crises. At the economic level, an old-style crisis of harvest failure in 1845-7, more serious than those of 1816-17 or 1830-1, had important and cumulative effects throughout society. Peasants could not pay their rents, mortgages and other debts, which led to increased levels of foreclosure and hurt rural crafts that depended on agricultural prosperity. Crop failure also doubled

the price of basic foodstuffs like rye and potatoes, causing widespread distress among those living on the edge of subsistence. Even in normal times, food accounted for 80 per cent of spending by poor families. Parts of the rural population were now reduced to eating grass, clover and potato peelings. The cost of food rose even more steeply in the towns, and this had an important secondary effect. It further reduced the purchasing power available for other produce, driving many businesses into bankruptcy. Textile towns like Krefeld were devastated.

In urban Germany, and in areas where outworking or rural industry was extensive, this last old-style crisis of dearth coincided with a crisis of a different kind: a downturn of the business cycle in 1847, imported from England, which hit the textile and engineering branches especially hard. Small businesses failed as markets collapsed and creditors called in their loans. Bankruptcies caused severe pressure on the banks, some of which suspended activities early in 1848, placing hundreds of firms and tens of thousands of workers at risk. Larger concerns, including Borsig and Krupp, laid off men. Yet another problem was therefore added to the crisis of food shortages and rising prices, as the normally high levels of underemployment in German towns now became, in many cases, chronic unemployment. In Pforzheim (Baden) three-quarters of the labour force was idle. The double aspect of the crisis made it all the more potent. So did the weight of accumulated social grievances – peasants angry at feudal privileges and their exclusion from former common woodlands, craftsmen chafing over their loss of security, the urban underclass barely subsisting at the best of times. The second half of the 1840s saw growing social unrest. Peasants in Galicia rose in protest in 1846. The following year there were bread riots and other forms of violent collective action across Germany, from Hamburg, Braunschweig and the eastern provinces of Prussia in the north, to Baden and Württemberg in the south.

Bread riots peaked in the summer of 1847, and it has often been pointed out that the harvest that year was good. But the improved crop could not help peasants who had consumed their

seed corn or been foreclosed, just as it meant little to those who remained unemployed or had already fallen victim to bankruptcy. Nor should we expect some automatic relationship between hunger and revolution. Often it was not the most debilitated who rioted, but the small peasant, journeyman or struggling master. The psychological impact of the economic double crisis was immense. It further eroded trust in 'complacent' governments, placing a question mark against their competence and their very legitimacy, not least among the propertied, the relatively well off and members of the political opposition. So an event like the Silesian 'hunger-typhus' of 1847 became a political as well as an economic fact. The Prussian government initially tried to conceal the extent of a tragedy that cost thousands of lives; then it belatedly sent Rudolf Virchow to the scene, a liberal doctor who bitterly criticized the incompetence of the authorities for allowing loss of life on the scale of 'a small war'.² Official responses to the food crisis varied. Southern governments were the most active, buying up grain and effectively suspending the rules of the free market. But Prussia would not even suspend grain exports. When it finally got around to distributing food from military stores and purchasing from grain-dealers in 1847, the result was to drive up prices and hamper the relief efforts of municipalities and charities, especially in the west. This was typical of the stumbling uncertainty with which many governments responded to the crisis. Sometimes popular protest was harshly repressed, as in Galicia in 1846 and during the Berlin 'potato revolution' of 1847. Other protesters were left on a looser rein. It was a divided response which, with hindsight, both angered and emboldened the population.

Material and nonmaterial grievances reinforced each other to create a crisis mentality. This mood was fostered by events elsewhere, for what happened in Germany belonged to a larger European ferment. In 1847, unrest in northern Italy prompted Austrian military intervention and raised the political temperature in the German Confederation. The social and political struggles that led to civil war in Switzerland at the end of the

year also had an impact on German opinion, especially in the southwest. Revolution broke out in Palermo in January 1848; and when news reached Germany of the February revolution in France that overturned the regime of Louis-Philippe, it seemed to signal that the old order was ripe for collapse everywhere in Metternich's Europe. Trains bringing newspapers and letters with the latest news from Paris were met by excited throngs of people. Efforts by the censors to play down events only provided grist for the rumour mills. The result was an eruption of pent-up feelings. Even in isolated, politically backward Oldenburg, a gathering in Delmenhorst on 28 February toasted the 'world-shaking news from Paris'.³ Crowds formed in the German cities, bringing together members of the professions, especially the more marginal, shopkeepers, journeymen and labourers. They were swollen by thousands, sometimes tens of thousands, from outlying districts who descended on the local seat of government when they heard the news. Monster meetings were held, petitions drawn up and crowds gathered outside parliaments, palaces and town halls, calling for an end to censorship, the establishment of citizens' militias or civil guards, liberal ministers, a national parliament and the removal of remaining feudal privileges. There was a striking uniformity to these demands, but it was a product of the general politicization of the 1840s, not of any organized leadership. The crowds were spontaneous, animated by a heady belief that abuses would now be corrected and the old world made over. That diffuse and generous enthusiasm, the motif of springtime, was an important part of the German revolutionary mood in March 1848.

What had happened in 1830 in Braunschweig and a few other states now occurred throughout the Confederation, although not simultaneously. The popular movement began in Baden in the more radical southwest, and spread north and east through the states of the 'Third Germany': Württemberg, Bavaria, Nassau, the two Hessens, Saxony, Hanover. Revolutionary demands were also raised in the Prussian provinces, especially the Rhineland and Silesia. Faced with crowds that only the most conspiratorially-minded (like Prince William of Prussia) could

blame on revolutionary agitators, against a background of parallel outbreaks of rural violence that showed contempt for established authority, the German regimes were torn by indecision. To the two classic preconditions of revolution – economic crisis and revolutionary demands – was added a third: a divided and vacillating ruling élite. There were clashes between government troops and insurgents in several capital cities where rulers acceded slowly or incompletely to popular wishes. In Berlin, where antimilitary feeling ran especially high, there was sporadic skirmishing from 13 March onwards, accompanying the daily mass meetings and hail of petitions. This culminated in the building of barricades out of carts, beams and woolsacks on 18 March after military provocation, and 300 died in the subsequent fighting, mainly journeymen and workers. A similar sequence of events in Vienna led to 50 deaths. But no ruler in March 1848 proved willing to commit the degree of armed force that might have crushed the revolutionary crowds. Instead, a collective loss of nerve gripped rulers, courts and nobility. The Prussian landed élite was, in the words of one of them, Adolf von Thadden-Trieglaff, ‘paralysed by icy fear’.⁴ Only one German ruler lost his throne, Ludwig I of Bavaria making way for his brother Maximilian, but everywhere the structure of ruling authority collapsed relatively quickly. Demands were conceded, elections promised. Metternich, reactionary symbol of the *Vormärz*, fled to London after his hardline advice had been rejected. Following the bloody clashes in Berlin on 18 March, a disorientated Frederick William IV withdrew his troops, performed a characteristically moist-eyed act of penance before the revolutionary martyrs, and issued an address to ‘my people and the German nation’.⁵ His hated reactionary brother, Prince William, decamped to England, and members of the shrinking royal entourage struggled to get out of uniform and into civilian clothes. ‘Is there still a Prussia?’ asked the elder statesman Hans von Gagern on 23 March.⁶ In 1848, unlike 1830, the revolution did not stop short of Austria and Prussia, the two great powers in Germany.

Three general points deserve emphasis. First, one of the most

striking aspects of these events was the speed with which they occurred, underlining the importance of new means of communication. This was the first European revolution of which news spread by steamer and telegraph, the first in which the train carried rural inhabitants to the urban centres of political power. Secondly, without trivializing the deaths on the barricades or the seriousness of local rural disturbances, the March revolutions can be described as relatively bloodless. As in other parts of Europe, the most violent revolutionary and counter-revolutionary episodes would come later. In March, contemporaries of varied political persuasions were struck by the sheer theatricality of events: the posturing of Frederick William, the dandyism of the Viennese students and German poet-revolutionaries, with their flowing locks, feathered hats and loosely-tied scarves, the way in which dramatic symbols of fire and light were used to celebrate the revolution. In countless small towns windows were illuminated and torchlit processions held. Viennese workers destroyed the gas lamps between the old city and its surrounding industrial suburbs, so that the flames flared into the sky.⁷ We should not underestimate these gestural aspects of the revolution: they were potent symbols of release from the restrictive *Vormärz* order. But the drama of the March events, like their suddenness, also disguised something important. There was a gulf between the rhetoric of March and the reality of what had happened. The revolutionaries were less powerful than they appeared, the forces of the old order less weak. That was to be crucial in what followed.

Thirdly, and finally, the focus of revolutionary energy was fairly clear in March: it was the capital cities, where nervous rulers fell over themselves to make concessions. The capitulation of authority created a temporary power vacuum which new political institutions and movements filled. From that point onwards it is more difficult to determine where the revolution had its centre. The problem is not simply geographical, although the fact that the revolution proceeded unevenly from state to state is also of prime significance. Just as important, while many different elements combined to make the revolution possible, its

outbreak released forces of still greater diversity. The collapse of authority produced an intoxicated sense of new possibilities that spurred some Germans to further actions, but filled others with fear. Between March 1848 and June 1849 the revolution proceeded, or stalled, at many different levels: within the reconstructed political institutions of the states, in the national parliament established at Frankfurt, and in the multitude of new extra-parliamentary organizations. Events during these fifteen months would repeatedly underline the importance of the complex interaction between these different levels.

Among their very first concessions, the German princes named new men to head the so-called 'March ministries': Römer in Württemberg, Bekk in Baden, Hergenhahn in Nassau, Sttve in Hanover, Braun in Saxony, Camphausen in Prussia. Most were prominent opposition figures in parliament, bourgeois or noblemen with moderate liberal views. This marked a first step to try to tame the revolution by directing it into narrowly constitutional channels. Also in March, a self-selecting group of similar liberal notables met in Heidelberg to organize the convening of an assembly that would discuss elections to a German national parliament. This body, the 'preparliament', met in Frankfurt on 31 March. Its deliberations immediately exposed the difference that was already becoming clear in the individual states between moderates and radicals, the former keen to work with the princes and the still-existing Confederation, the latter impatient to deepen the revolution. In Frankfurt, the Badenese radical Struve called for the preparliament to turn itself into a permanent, Jacobin-type convention. When this was decisively rejected, and the moderate March ministry in Baden acted to curb local radicalism in the name of order, Struve and Hecker proclaimed a republic in south Baden, the scene of exceptional agrarian unrest. Here, a poorly led ragtag army of journeymen, labourers, peasants and students was quickly crushed by 30,000 Confederation troops. It was the first example of the reserve power still available to authority, and it served to harden the lines of political division inside and outside parliaments.

What happened in Baden also made something else very clear:

the sheer vigour of popular activity. As so often in revolutionary situations, the initial revolution was only the starting point. Once it had occurred, it made new things thinkable and unleashed fresh demands. The summer of 1848 provided ample evidence of this radicalization effect. Peasants, rural labourers, journeymen and industrial workers demanded redress of their grievances and engaged in direct action – burning records, machine-breaking, attacking grain stores. Actions like these were usually triggered by particular local circumstances, and historians have often portrayed the disturbances as narrowly materialist and inchoate. Belly-issues were understandably prominent, but we should not overlook the powerful moral categories that underlay popular anger: the right to the fruits of one's labour and a fair wage, hostility to hoarding and 'usury', emphasis on the 'just price' and the journeyman's 'honour'. It is also true that protesters often posed their demands in terms of a return to some imagined golden age – masters calling for a restored guild system are an obvious example. But these aspirations were accompanied by calls for the abolition of feudal privileges, the guaranteed right of association and fairer taxation. The fifteen thousand or so workers and journeymen who belonged to the Workers' Brotherhood organized by the printer Stephan Born demanded employment and security in a way that looked backwards and forwards, using a familiar vocabulary to assert the rights of labour in a new world. And while popular demands often ran at an oblique angle to political debate, it is also striking that social protest often shaped itself along 'modern' political lines. The Workers' Brotherhood offers a good example, for it was much less antipolitical than its French equivalents. Masters and journeymen more generally organized themselves as interest groups, held congresses, sent petitions. They formed part of a larger political awakening, made possible by the revolution, that local studies are increasingly uncovering.⁸ Businessmen, workers, lawyers, primary school teachers, academics – the impulse to organize existed throughout German society. Among those for whom the revolution offered new possibilities were two groups who had in common their lack of emancipation: Jews

and women. While, on the one hand, widespread anti-Semitism accompanied peasant unrest in many areas, the revolution also brought Jews into German parliaments for the first time, including influential figures such as Johann Jacoby and Adolf Fischhof. Women were excluded from the electoral and parliamentary arenas, but played a significant role at demonstrations and meetings. The revolution opened up new opportunities at every level. An organization of female domestic servants was formed in Leipzig in April 1848, which aimed 'to assert with appropriate modesty our just demands for humane treatment on the part of our masters, and to protect ourselves against incursions and illegalities'.⁹ This was also a decisive moment in the creation of separate women's organizations, of an embryonic women's 'movement'. Kathinka Zitz-Halein's Mainz women's association, *Humania*, had 1700 members; Louise Otto's newspaper, the *Frauen-Zeitung*, was a product of the revolutionary years. There was support for the political rights of women from the left wing of the revolutionary movement. Ludwig Bamberger called for women's entry into public life, demanding their emancipation from 'perfumed slavery'.¹⁰ It should be said, however, that the revolution also bred misogynist militants. Ladies of the court remained prime targets of caricaturists' vulgarity, and the satirical press abounded in heavy-handed jokes about the 'marriage constitution' and the 'republic of women'.

Associations, or *Vereine*, hitherto largely the preserve of notables, became a vehicle for much wider participation during the revolution. The most obvious sign of this political flowering was the enormous growth in the number of clubs that identified themselves with a particular ideological position or party. They included democratic, liberal and conservative associations, the Communist League, and the Pius Associations (named after Pope Pius IX) that were the principal focus of a formidable Catholic political mobilization. The extent of popular political involvement was extraordinary by prerevolutionary standards. An idea of what this meant in practice can be gained by considering just two examples. Democratic associations not only flourished in radical areas like the Rhineland and Württemberg:

by August 1848 200,000 members were enrolled in 200 local branches of Ludwig Schlinke's Silesian *Haupttrustikalverein*. And the Pius Associations were able, with considerable clerical assistance, to collect well over a quarter of a million Catholic signatures on petitions. The press was also revolutionized: new papers appeared (more than 300 in Austria alone), alongside pamphlets and satirical broadsheets – 'a flood of street literature'.¹¹ 'March verses' were sold by hawkers and 'March songs' sung; unpopular figures were serenaded with charivaris or 'rough music' outside their windows, when they were not hanged in effigy.

Popular political life had its own dynamic, but also fed off the many elections that took place in 1848. May was the crucial month, when elections were held for the Prussian and other state parliaments, and for the German national parliament in Frankfurt. These were unprecedented political events in German history, given the publicity that surrounded them and the wide suffrage. All 'independent' adult males could vote in elections to the national parliament. This was differently interpreted in the individual states, but it has been calculated that as many as three-quarters of adult males were eligible to vote and the turnout varied regionally between 40 and 75 per cent. The body that met in the Frankfurt Paulskirche on 18 May was nevertheless heavily weighted towards the social élite. There are several explanations for this – the widespread use of indirect voting as a filter, the desire of voters to send figures of stature to the national parliament, simple deference towards 'popular' notables. The result, anyway, was striking. No fewer than 436 of the 812 members who sat during the lifetime of the parliament were employed by the state, led by administrative and judicial officials. (Professors, contrary to legend, numbered a fairly modest 49, although their influence was disproportionately great.) A total of 100 businessmen and landowners were outnumbered by about 150 members of the free professions, two-thirds of them lawyers. Another 50 were clergymen. Craftsmen and peasants numbered just seven in total.¹² It was a parliament of university-educated officials and lawyers. Not surprisingly, its members thought in constitutional and legal terms. They

emphasized the lines of continuity between themselves and the Confederation, and were mindful of the power wielded by the states so many of them served.

Starting with contemporaries, the Frankfurt parliament has been the object of harsh criticisms: that it was a mere talking shop obsessed with the fastidious discussion of fine ideas; that it ignored or postponed grappling with the central issues of the revolution while it still had the chance; that – in the scornful words of Engels – it was ‘nothing but a stage where old and worn-out political characters exhibited their involuntary ludicrousness and their impotence of thought, as well as action’.¹³ These charges are hard to accept as they stand. The discursive style at Frankfurt was no more florid than that of other contemporary parliaments, and in many ways the assembly turned itself with impressive speed into a modern legislature. Procedural rules were drawn up from nothing, and a system of parties (*Fraktionen*) emerged that was more developed than anything seen in even the most advanced pre-1848 parliaments. The achievement of the Constitutional Committee in preparing a draft on basic rights in less than six weeks hardly suggests pedantic procrastination – it took the parliament of the later North German Confederation three years to come up with the citizenship laws of 1870. The committee’s recommendations concerned fundamental issues: the rights of free speech and assembly, religious equality, the abolition of the aristocracy as a privileged class, national citizenship for all Germans. And it needs to be emphasized that the parliament’s preoccupation with basic rights between July and October accurately reflected the central concern of all *Vormärz* oppositional currents, moderate and radical, with this subject. Indeed, nearly a fifth of the 17,000 petitions received by the Frankfurt parliament concerned basic rights, and another fifth the question of church-state relations that fell under the same rubric. On the crucial question of executive power, the parliament proved almost bold in exceeding its formal mandate. After stalemate between the right (who insisted on recognizing the princes’ powers) and the left (who wanted parliamentary sovereignty), there was overwhelming support for

a compromise proposed by the president of the assembly, Heinrich von Gagern, whereby the parliament established a 'provisional executive' on its own authority, without reference to the states or the Confederation – but with the Habsburg Archduke Johann as its nominal head. Four days later, on June 28, a German government was formed.

Yet the fact remains that the national parliament failed to seize the summer. The social question offers a prime example. For the most part the assembly maintained an Olympian detachment from pressing popular needs, believing that large political questions had to take precedence. Its Economic Committee, faced with a torrent of contradictory petitions and demands, torn between protectionists and free-traders, proved divided and inconsequential. The Württemberg representatives at Frankfurt, probably more attuned than most to popular impatience, found that their urbane reassurances fell on deaf ears. It was reported from Ulm that there was 'little trust for the learned men of the Paulskirche, who are viewed as too theoretical and moderate'.¹⁴ The criticism applied equally to the treatment of constitutional and national questions, discussion of which was postponed during the crucial summer months. But what was the use of basic rights if the issue of sovereignty remained unresolved? What did it mean to declare national citizenship if the borders of Germany remained unclear and there was open conflict between Danes and Germans in Schleswig and Holstein? The underlying issue in both cases was the relationship of national assembly to the Confederation and individual states, especially Prussia and Austria. And this issue was ducked. Political practice at Frankfurt was based on consensus, within an assembly where the parliamentary arithmetic heavily favoured the centre, and especially the centre-right. This was reflected in the composition of the first provisional executive, headed by a prince and numbering four nobles (one a Prussian general) and two Hanseatic merchants as its six ministers. The caution and moderation displayed at Frankfurt were not risible in themselves, but they had disastrous effects as social and political polarization eroded the middle ground.

The parliament, like the March ministries in the individual states, was left behind by the dynamic of the revolution. On the one side, democratic and radical elements mobilized popular support – in the southwest and west, in Saxony, even in rural areas of eastern Prussia like Silesia. Popular impatience led to a series of uprisings, put down by Confederation troops ordered in by the provisional executive: in Wiesbaden and Frankfurt-Sachsenhausen in July; in Frankfurt again and in Baden in September, an insurrection that brought together social discontent, radical impatience and nationalist anger over the Schleswig-Holstein crisis; in central Germany, where salt miners and toy-makers rose in October. By these actions, the provisional executive acquired a reputation among the radical and socially discontented as being no better than the repressive *Vormärz* regimes. At the same time, its attempts to maintain 'order' played into the hands of reactionaries and revealed its own fundamental impotence. Recognized diplomatically only by the USA and small European powers like Greece, Belgium and Sweden, the provisional executive also possessed little real power at home. It had a minister of the interior without police, a minister of finance without revenue. The one area in which it acted decisively – deploying Confederation troops to suppress disorder – was dependent on the goodwill of the German states. And here the counter-revolution was growing in strength through the summer and into the autumn.

Counter-Revolution and 'Second Revolution'

Outside Austria and Prussia, in the 'third Germany', this process was mostly unspectacular and incremental. Princes, courts and bureaucrats started to recover their confidence. Their resolve was strengthened by the obvious ability of Confederation troops to crush further uprisings. Events elsewhere in Europe, like the repression of the June days in Paris, about which ambassadors

kept their masters well-informed, also raised morale in ruling circles. So did the growth of conservative law-and-order sentiment within the bourgeoisie and lower middle class – master craftsmen, shopkeepers, small businessmen. In this critical swing group, fear of the urban mob and the ‘proletariat’ started to replace the anger of March. The shift found expression in those symbols of March, the civil guard detachments: some swung over very quickly to the side of ‘order’ (Hanover, Munich, Augsburg), in others a conservative wing vied with radical elements (Dresden), or a separate conservative formation was established (Hamburg). There was also counter-revolutionary potential in the countryside, especially where rulers were shrewd enough to make quick concessions over remaining feudal privileges. Where they did so, it was possible to drive a wedge between property-owning peasants and rural underclass. The former were happy to tolerate, even to participate in destroying seigneurial records or attacking an unpopular bailiff; they reacted very differently when the spectre of rural ‘communism’ among the landless seemed to threaten their own dominance.

With international and local indicators apparently moving in their favour, the German princes began to play for time. They delayed elections until the end of the year, as in Saxony, Bavaria and Hanover; or they held elections on the pre-1848 suffrage, then delayed the subsequent meeting of parliament, as in Württemberg; or they exploited moderate fears of radicalism to delay holding elections at all in 1848, as in Baden. None of this means that regimes in the ‘third Germany’ were inactive. One notable development was a new willingness to make credit available to bail out banks and businesses, thereby creating work that would take the edge off social discontent. This policy was actively pursued in Saxony. Large sums were funnelled into the industrial towns, identified as the most dangerous centres of unrest. The growth of the state paper money supply in Germany between 1847 and 1850, from 30 million to 53 million Thaler, shows the extent of the intervention.¹⁵ But these measures did not automatically assuage popular discontent; they might even exacerbate it. While financiers and businessmen welcomed poli-

cies that aided work-creation, many members of the lower middle class were outraged. 'The humanity shown to the workers exceeds the limits of common sense, only the artisan, the productive *Mittelstand*, has been deserted', complained one petition to Frankfurt.¹⁶ Yet the radicalization among journeymen and workers meant that what might have been welcomed before the revolution was now seen as too little, too late.

Exactly the same problem arose when it came to political and constitutional issues. Baden provides a good, if somewhat atypical, illustration. No new elections had been called; but the existing parliament, the new Bekk ministry and the Karlsruhe bureaucracy did enact substantial political reforms. A revised structure of local administration was officially gazetteered in the spring of 1849; and a new constitution that included an elected upper house and other concessions to radical demands was ready in draft in April 1849, before being overtaken by national events. But this was no longer enough for the growing body of republican sentiment. One can understand why regime and moderates found it irksome that their willingness to undertake reforms, even after two republican risings in Baden, earned them so little credit. Radicals, on the other hand, were frustrated at what was happening nationally, angered at the Badenese state regime's refusal to recognize locally elected republican mayors, and convinced that concessions would only be wrung out of Karlsruhe by maintaining their political pressure. In short, what would almost certainly have been acceptable in February 1848 was no longer so a year later, thanks to the radicalizing effect of revolution.¹⁷ Baden was unusual in the relative willingness of moderate ministry, civil service and ruling prince to make concessions, but the tug of political forces there was characteristic. Across the 'third Germany' the reluctant revolutionaries of the March ministries, or their successors, faced difficulties caused by the different time-scale of events taking place at Frankfurt. Meanwhile, they were caught locally between radicalized (but often conflicting) popular demands on the one side, moderate fears and the foot-dragging of the princes on the other. Their instincts usually favoured law and order. In Hesse-Darmstadt,

for example, legislation 'Concerning the Maintenance of the Legal Order' in July 1848 was followed three months later by measures against 'Abuse of the Press and Popular Assemblies'. In most of the smaller states it was creeping political reaction that threatened the clubs, newspapers and other popular political institutions that had been formed in the wake of the revolution.

The counter-revolution was more open as well as more decisive in the two largest states, the weather vanes of the German revolution. In the summer of 1848 the very existence of Austria appeared to be at stake. The Hungarians, Czechs and Italians had rebelled, and threatened to pull apart the whole multinational Habsburg empire. Vienna itself was the most radical of all German capital cities. When a restrictive franchise for the promised parliamentary elections was announced by the new government in May, dissatisfaction brought thousands back on to the streets and attempts to disperse them led to a further uprising. The court fled to Innsbruck, prompting one of many satirically reworked Lord's Prayers: 'Our Father, which art in Innsbruck, hallowed be thy name, but our will be done, for we are the sovereign people.'¹⁸ From late May, for fully three months, a revolutionary coalition of democratic associations, radical workers' clubs, municipal politicians, Civil Guard and the students' Academic Legion shared control in Vienna with a nervous government and (after July) the newly elected Austrian parliament. Its main political creation was the Jacobin-sounding Committee of Public Safety. Against this background the army, successful in suppressing a Galician uprising in April, assumed critical importance as the embodiment of Habsburg authority, and it proved more loyal to the exiled court than to the moderate government in Vienna. The rolling back of the revolution began with military operations against the rebellious nationalities. Windischgrätz crushed the Czech revolution in June, the fall of Prague marking the first military defeat of a revolutionary capital. Martial law, mass arrests and military dictatorship followed. In a strategically more important campaign during late July, Radetzky enjoyed similar success in northern Italy, and Milan was reoccupied. The Hungarians offered stiffer resistance to

General Jellačić, and it was the attempt to mobilize troops in Vienna to reinforce his campaign that sparked a final, bloody clash in the capital city in October 1848. Mutinous soldiers, joined by workers, democrats, students and a newly formed radical militia made up a revolutionary body of perhaps 100,000, armed with weapons stolen from the armoury. But they were overmatched against the regular army. The retaking of Vienna by Windischgrätz at the end of October cost more than 2000 lives; parliament was dismissed and a reactionary government installed under Prince Schwarzenberg.

The victory of the Austrian counter-revolution was significant at many levels. In the first place, it underlined the military superiority of regular soldiers. Almost as important, the loyalty of Habsburg troops from the smaller 'subject nations' (Jellačić himself was a Croat) showed how the conflict of nationalities could work against the revolution – a point with larger significance for the German revolutions as a whole. What happened in Vienna also demonstrates how social divisions undermined the revolution. By October, 'red' Vienna was surrounded by a countryside that was now pacific: early in September, the Austrian parliament decreed the end of all remaining feudal privileges, and further peasant interest in the revolution ceased abruptly. In Vienna itself, the arrival of soldiers was greeted with relief by most members of the middle and lower middle class. Their growing anxiety through the summer had already been signalled by the severity with which the Civil Guard, dominated by property owners, put down workers' protests in August over wage cuts for public works. It was then that the Civil Guard left the coalition of March revolutionaries, and the Committee of Public Safety collapsed. Social divisions had fractured and undermined the revolution in Vienna two months before Windischgrätz arrived with his 60,000 men. Finally, the recapture of Vienna was important in strategic and symbolic terms. One celebrated victim of the repression that followed was Robert Blum, a leading member of the left in the Frankfurt parliament, who travelled to Vienna in October and was executed the following month for his part in the revolution. Blum saw the events

there as a turning point, and so they were. The revolution had suffered a major defeat, and counter-revolutionaries everywhere were emboldened.

Prussia is a case in point. The counter-revolution there proceeded along distinct but parallel lines. One obvious difference was the role played by the Prussian constituent assembly elected in May. Like the multinational Austrian parliament that finally convened in July, the Prussian parliament contained more members of the lower classes than the national parliament – peasants and craftsmen together made up about a sixth of all Prussian deputies. Unlike the Vienna or Frankfurt assemblies, the parliament in Berlin had a political centre of gravity on the left and centre-left, and it pressed hard over questions of political power. During the summer and early autumn of 1848 it passed resolutions that called for parliamentary rule and an army bound by the constitution; it demanded the abolition of hunting rights without compensation, and denied the monarch's claim to rule 'by the grace of God'. All of this was clearly provocative, and criticized as such by moderates, but it must be seen as part of a power struggle waged against an increasingly obdurate king and the growing threat of counter-revolution. Once again, as in the 'third Germany', the king's ministers were prepared (especially in the early months of revolution) to provide state credits to aid work-creation; but they became progressively less willing to make political concessions. Quite the reverse: a reactionary tendency can be clearly read off from the fact that a series of ministerial changes shifted the government step by step to the right. There were other pointers to a determination on the right to roll back the revolution. Immediately after the March events a reactionary 'Camarilla' had formed at court; the founding of the conservative *Kreuzzeitung* newspaper followed in July, and the so-called Junker parliament convened in August. The right was outraged by what it saw as parliamentary presumption; it was also – as in Vienna – appalled by what was happening in the streets. There may have been no Committee of Public Safety in the Prussian capital, but there was another attempted uprising in June, democratic associations were very active, and 'flying

units' of intellectuals, workers and craftsmen organized themselves alongside the Civil Guard. Young journeymen and construction workers appropriated the streets, mocking gendarmes, demanding money from the well-dressed, and forcing tribute from shopkeepers in the form of food, cigars and clothing.

A further parallel with Austria was the hope for order that court, nobility and bureaucracy vested in the army. 'The army, that is now our fatherland', observed Albrecht von Roon.¹⁹ Prussian troops had withdrawn in March, angry and frustrated: they had not been defeated or disarmed. Just as the Habsburg army first fought back in Cracow, so the Prussian army first measured its strength by crushing a Polish revolt in Posen in early May. The following month it put down the attempted rising in Berlin; in July a clash with the Civil Guard in a Silesian town left fourteen civilians dead. Through the summer the shadow of the army fell over Prussian politics. Soldiers pressed Frederick William in September to draw up plans to overturn the constitution, and the naming of the hawkish General Wrangel as supreme commander in Berlin served virtually as advance notice of a coup. Following the interim ministry of General Pfuël, the coup arrived when the reactionary general Count Brandenburg was named prime minister on November 1 and parliament prorogued. Nine days later General Wrangel entered Berlin with 80,000 men; martial law was declared and political rights were suspended. Attempts by the left to organize the withholding of taxes proved unsuccessful, despite substantial support in the Rhineland, Westphalia and Silesia.

Not only did the timetable of counter-revolution in Berlin shadow events in Vienna: there were also structural similarities. In Prussia, as in Austria, the spearhead of counter-revolution was the army, but there was a broader basis of popular support. Military rule in Berlin was greeted with relief by many bourgeois and shopkeepers, the backbone of the Civil Guard which had often clashed with workers and 'flying units'. In rural and small-town Prussia there were popular 'church and king' riots during 1848-9. Some occurred in areas where there had been food riots in 1847, a reminder that the fund of deference to the 'just

ruler' and the 'father of his country' was not exhausted, and that the antagonism of March 1848 towards individual officials or landlords – but not to the system as a whole – could also direct itself against liberals, democrats and Jews.²⁰ Sentiments of this kind were mobilized by conservatives, especially in the core provinces of Brandenburg and Pomerania, through the Association for King and Fatherland, patriotic and Prussian leagues, ex-servicemen's and peasant associations. By early July 1848 conservative organizations had 20,000 members, by the summer of 1849 numbers had risen to 60,000, most of them peasants, master craftsmen and shopkeepers.

The Austrian and Prussian counter-revolutions in autumn 1848 marked a turning point, but they did not put an end to the revolution. The balance of forces had altered, but the political situation remained fluid. Even in the two most powerful states the military crackdown did not mean a return to *Vormärz* conditions. The new Austrian chief minister, Schwarzenberg, was no simple-minded reactionary. Disinclined to stick back together what had been cracked in March, he unsentimentally insisted that the Emperor Ferdinand abdicate in favour of his eighteen-year-old nephew Francis Joseph. Key liberal ministers were retained; and the parliament disbanded by Windischgrätz in Vienna reconvened in the Moravian town of Kremsier. In Prussia, too, Count Brandenburg dissuaded Frederick William from following a course of outright military dictatorship. The Prussian parliament was dissolved, but a new constitution was proclaimed in December, designed to isolate the radical left. It provided for a democratically elected lower house, even as it guaranteed the monarch generous executive and emergency powers. Elections to a new parliament were held early in 1849. In other words, in both Austria and Prussia the real power of the army existed in conjunction with a flexible postrevolutionary conservatism. Equally, the contempt displayed towards the Frankfurt parliament in autumn by Berlin and Vienna, most brazenly in the execution of Robert Blum despite his parliamentary immunity, was balanced by the recognition in both states

that the 'German question' remained open until the national parliament finished its work.

It would also be wrong to think that the events of October and November put an end to popular politics. On the contrary: as in France, counter-revolution in the capital was the prelude to more furious political mobilization in the provinces. Some of this was undertaken by conservatives, as we have seen. Moderate liberal organizations also grew in number, under the loose direction of the National Association, established at Kassel in November, with around 160 affiliated groups by April 1849. But mobilization took place, above all, on the left. When the second Democratic Congress met in Berlin in late October, its delegates represented 260 associations in 140 towns. Following the November events in Prussia, left-wing members of the Frankfurt parliament established the Central March Association to coordinate the activity of these organizations. By the spring of 1849 the Association had at least 950 affiliated branches and half a million members. Democratic organizations were greater in number, larger in size and generally better coordinated from the centre than those of their rivals. Their support also reached down impressively into the popular classes. While the leadership was mainly drawn from the professions, especially the minor professions (elementary school teachers, pharmacists, notaries, editors), journeymen, masters and small businessmen predominated among ordinary members, and in some places (Dresden, for example) there were significant numbers of workers among the rank and file.

The Frankfurt parliament therefore found itself placed within a still-changing political landscape as it turned in October 1848 from the discussion of basic rights to the question of the form the future Germany should take. There were really three inter-related issues here: territory, squaring the new German nation with the existing states-system, and sovereignty. The territorial question arose most obviously over disputed borders – Schleswig, Posen, the Tyrol. But that, in turn, raised the decisive issue of relations with Austria and Prussia, whose independent actions did much to determine where the outer borders were drawn.

On October 27, the parliament voted overwhelmingly for the so-called 'greater German' solution, that would include the German parts of the Habsburg empire but not the non-German lands (Hungary, Galicia, Croatia, Northern Italy). However, this ran up against Austrian determination to maintain its empire intact. That, after all, was what Windischgrätz, Radetzky and Jellačić had been fighting for. In late November, Schwarzenberg declared Austria's continued existence as a state to be 'a German and a European necessity'.²¹ This decisively shifted the terms of debate at Frankfurt. The outward sign of this was the resignation of Schmerling, who had been prime minister of the provisional executive since September, and his replacement by the pro-Prussian Gagern. More profoundly, the political groups in the national assembly realigned themselves around 'greater German' and 'lesser German' positions. The former brought together Catholics, conservatives, Austrians and southern Germans, with members of the left who wanted a unitary greater Germany. It was a negative coalition in a double sense: held together only by common hostility to a Prussian-dominated Germany, it had no idea how to achieve its goal in the face of Vienna's obstructionist policy. The 'lesser German' party, with its strength among north Germans, Protestants and moderate liberals, looked to Prussia as the more progressive of the two major powers in spheres such as economics, communications and education. The Württemberger Otto Abel typically praised Prussia for 'the liveliest traffic in goods and ideas'.²² But advocates of a lesser Germany also faced problems. They, too, were only loosely united in their aims, and regarded Prussia with varying degrees of enthusiasm or resignation. On top of that, all Lesser Germans – whether more or less enthusiastic – had to overlook Frederick William's stated refusal to become German emperor without the approval of the other German princes. Instead, they seized upon his more 'national' rhetoric in March, and comforted themselves with the sympathy displayed by Prussian prime minister Brandenburg for a hereditary Prussian emperor of Germany.

It would be easy to argue that both sides built on illusions,

but we have to remember the position of an assembly whose principal authority was moral, forced to react to the tactical gambits and mixed signals coming from Vienna and Berlin. Austria still insisted on acting as a member of the Confederation; Frederick William revealed the true extent of his contempt for the assembly only in correspondence with ambassadors and fellow monarchs. Against this uncertain background Gagern, the great architect of compromise, put together a plan that would combine a Prussian-led Germany with a form of looser Austrian association. Historians disagree on whether this was an absurdity, or a realistic proposal that prefigured the German-Austrian alliance of 1879. But the question is moot: the fragile majority for the plan failed to hold, and Vienna slammed the door on greater German hopes when Schwarzenberg issued the Kremsier constitution in early March, re-emphasizing the unity of the Habsburg empire. This step gave notice that Austria would accept no German state-form more advanced than the loose pre-1848 Confederation, and was simultaneously designed to block Prussia. Yet it left the Frankfurt parliament with nothing but the Prussian option, unless members of the assembly were prepared to pack their bags and go home. Tactical considerations now shaped the final form of constitution approved by the assembly. First, in order to win over members of the formerly greater German left, the moderates of the lesser German party made two major concessions. They accepted a more limited monarchical power of veto, and a German national parliament elected by universal manhood suffrage. Secondly, disappointed greater German conservatives deliberately voted for these more radical provisions in order to make the ensuing constitution unacceptable – in short, they engaged in the same kind of sabotage practised by Vienna itself. Thus, at the end of March the assembly voted to establish a genuine constitutional monarchy, a federal system that preserved the existence of the individual states but included several unitary features, among them central responsibility for matters of war and peace, a uniform currency and post, and a single tariff and trade policy. A