

# 1848 The Year of Revolutions

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On January 12th, 1848, the people of Palermo came out into the streets in rebellion against the despotic rule of Ferdinand of Naples, later to become notorious as "King Bomba" for his brutal bombardment of the rebel city of Messina. This rising was the prelude to a whole series of revolutions, involving not merely Italy, but also France, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Bohemia, Transylvania, and all the small Slav peoples who were then the "inferior" races of the vast Austrian Empire. Even in England and Ireland, under the stimulus of continental examples, there were extensive riots and abortive revolutionary movements.

The events of 1848 represent in reality at least two different movements. In France, ever since the deposition of the legitimate Bourbon king, Charles X, in 1830, the big business men had ruled under the pretence of a constitutional government by Louis Philippe, "the Citizen King". The rising in France represented an attempt by the lower middle class, supported by the workers, to gain their share of power, and, in consequence, it had prominent social revolutionary elements.

The risings in the rest of Europe, on the other hand, were directed largely against the power which was wielded by the old conservative, Metternich, who, since 1815, by his direct domination over the whole of Central Europe and Italy, and his influence on the remaining continental rulers, had contrived to maintain, in spirit if not in name, the Holy Alliance of reaction and obscurantism as the main force in Europe. Assisted by the Pope, the princelings of Germany, and the rulers of those parts of Italy which, like Tuscany and Naples, were nominally independent, he had maintained as far as possible an almost absolute form of dynastic government, based on an aristocratic society. Austria, from which his power stemmed, was governed in the most despotic manner, and was known as "the China of Europe", since it was isolated by the most severe of censorships. No newspapers could

be published, and books, whether printed internally or imported from abroad, were subjected to the most rigorous examination before the citizens of the country were allowed to read them. Even the mildest radical or reformist propaganda was forbidden, and an efficient political police system assisted the control of Metternich and the Emperor Ferdinand.

The remainder of Germany was, in theory, a federation of large and small sovereign states, under the suzerainty of the Emperor. In fact, these States were completely under the reactionary domination of Metternich, who quickly called to order any prince daring to defer to liberal pretensions. Where a principality, like Baden, began to show the least sign of yielding to progressive tendencies, Metternich was quite prepared to interfere directly in its internal affairs. The only State in the German federation that really challenged the power of Austria was Prussia, but this was merely a dynastic struggle, and the Hohenzollerns were in complete agreement with Metternich over his policy of suppressing the democratic movements within Germany.

Within Austria were included, not only the small country which now bears that name, but also territories that today form parts of Czechoslovakia, Poland and Jugoslavia. In these areas all nationalist or democratic movements were carefully suppressed, the native languages were, as far as possible, forbidden, and all the key posts and services in the public administration were in the hands of Germans from Austria.

Among the subject territories was also the northern part of Italy, which, after the first fall of Napoleon in 1814, had been occupied by the Austrians, and retained as an Austrian dominion at the peace of 1815. The possession of this area gave the Austrian government strategic control of all Italy. While the native princes had returned to their provinces in 1814, and perhaps enjoyed more real sovereignty than the German princes, the Imperial authorities were careful to allow no democratic excesses even in parts of Italy outside their nominal control, and the comparative lack of direct interference was due only to the fact that most of the Italian princes were themselves too despotic to do anything that might displease Metternich. When, in 1821, the people of Naples rose and forced a democratic constitution on their king, the Imperial authorities did not scruple to violate the sovereignty of Neapolitan territory by sending an army to suppress the liberal movement and re-establish the old autocracy. The only state in Italy that possessed any real independence and could afford even the mildest leaning towards liberalism was the kingdom of Piedmont, which also included Genoa and Sardinia. This was due in part, at least, to the fact that Piedmont enjoyed a certain veiled support from both France and the Swiss cantons as a counterbalance to Austrian influence in Italy.

The remaining country over which the Emperor ruled was Hungary. This country was not part of the Empire, and was nominally independent, the Emperor of

Austria ruling it as king. But, in fact, since the days of Maria Theresa, it had become dominated by the Emperor's German bureaucracy, and continual attempts had been made to interfere with the rights of the Magyars, the ruling people of the country. But the Magyars were only one race in that sprawling land, which included Transylvania, inhabited largely by Roumanians, and Croatia, with its Slav population, as well as part of Serbia. The Magyar aristocracy, while claiming independence from Austrian domination and equality with Germans within the Habsburg dominions, themselves repudiated and tried to suppress any attempt by either Roumanians or Slavs to claim their autonomous rights, and attempted to maintain their continued suppression under Magyar institutions.

Feudalism persisted throughout Germany and the Austrian subject territories, with the exception of northern Italy, which had been freed of this particular institution by the Napoleonic rule, and the peasants were subjected to the tyrannies of the local landowners as well as those of the centralised bureaucracy. Unlike France and England, these countries had as yet no large class of industrial workers, and the middle class was only just emerging into a condition of political consciousness, much retarded, in the small states at least, by the general economic dependence on princely and aristocratic patronage. Nevertheless, the opening of communications and extension of commerce with the outside world, as well as the emergence of an industrial revolution in parts of Germany, were welding the bourgeoisie into a conscious class, of whom the more prosperous were feeling the manifold disadvantages of the division of Germany into thirty principalities, with as many frontiers, customs barriers and codes of local law, and were beginning to join the liberals in their demands for a united democratic Germany.

The first, and also the most bitterly fought revolution of 1848, was that which began in Italy in January of that year. The Italian revolutionary movement was essentially and predominantly nationalist. The middle classes were opposed to the separatist ideas of the various princes, who were concerned mostly with their own immediate local or dynastic interests. Having enjoyed a temporary unity under the Napoleonic government, the Italian bourgeoisie were not slow to see that, however irksome that dictatorship may have been, it gave them more commercial opportunities than the return to eighteenth-century conditions. They looked to the unity of Italy in a bourgeois democracy. Some, like Mazzini and Manin, wanted a republic, but the majority of the Italian liberals would have been content with a kingdom, and they looked towards Charles Albert of Savoy, the King of Piedmont, as the possible future king of a united Italy. Generally speaking, in the early part of the nineteenth century, there was a remarkable unity among Italians of all classes in their desire to get rid of native rulers as well as foreign oppressors, so heavily did the yoke of Austrian police tyranny, Papal obscurantism and the cruelty and corruption of the petty king: and princes, weigh upon burgess, peasant and artisan

alike. Thus the risings of towns and districts often showed an amazing unanimity, aristocrats, tradesmen, workers, farmers and even priests and monks, playing their part in the movement for a revolution that would free them from the intolerable oppression and corruption they had to endure.

The prelude to the risings of 1848 came when Gregory, one of the illiberal Popes, died and, owing to the dissensions within the College of Cardinals, the timid Pius IX, Pio Nono, was elected. Pius was not wholly hostile to the liberal cause in Rome, and the month after his election he conceded a partial political amnesty, and granted permission to form a civic guard in the city of Rome. From that time onwards Pio Nono became, like Charles Albert, an unwilling figurehead of the Italian revolutionary movement. He was regarded as a liberal opponent of the Austrians, which he certainly was not, and his minor concessions gave a great impetus to the movement for constitutional government and Italian unity, and helped to prepare the way for the risings of 1848.

Significantly, the first risings took place in January, 1848, in Milan and Palermo, the former city in the centre of the provinces subjected to the hated Austrian rule, the latter in the most disaffected part of the dominions of the King of Naples.

Neither of these risings was immediately successful, but they were followed by riots in all the principal cities, and during February the leading sovereign princes of Italy, the Pope, the King of Naples and the Grand Duke Of Tuscany, yielded in terror to the demands of their peoples, and promised constitutions.

The revolutionary initiative now passed to France. The political trickery and attempts at absolute rule of Louis Philippe and his minister Guizot, the French Metternich, the corruption that permeated the whole administration and more or less sold France to the big financiers who supported the Orleanist cause, the restricted suffrage which gave participation in the Government to a very tiny minority of the population, all combined, by the end of 1847, to produce a widespread movement for constitutional reform, and the opposition to the inept rule of Louis Philippe spread to all classes, even including the big financiers, who were being hit by the economic crisis, which during 1847 and the early part of 1848, caused very wide distress, particularly among the industrial workers, many thousands of whom were unemployed in all the large towns.

Guizot and his fellow ministers promised reform and then went back on their word; in the end the disgust with their manoeuvres was so great that a general demand arose in Paris for the dissolution of the Government. The ministerial majority in the Assembly dwindled until it was only preserved by the fact that many seats were held by government functionaries.

The final clash came over an apparently minor issue, as is often the case in revolutionary upheavals. The Liberals, led by Odilon Barrot and Thiers, had adopted as a propaganda device the idea of holding political banquets throughout the coun-

try, at which they hoped, by the numbers of their supporters, to impress the few electors into returning a vote hostile to the Government.

The increasingly general discontent, and the apparent success of the Liberal campaign, led the King and his advisers into an act of panic which provoked a wholly unexpected resistance. A great banquet in Paris was announced for February 22nd, and the Government decided to forbid it. Much feeling was aroused over this question, and on the appointed day the people of Paris came out into the streets to display their solidarity with the cause of reform. The Liberal leaders did not hold their banquet, but the barricades began to rise in the working-class streets. Before this popular indignation the King agreed to dismiss his ministry, and it is possible that the whole affair might have ended in a change of government and some mild electoral reforms, if a party of regular soldiers had not fired on a crowd of demonstrators and killed a number of them. All Paris rose in protest; barricades were erected in every quarter, and the workers, led by the moderate socialists like Ledru-Rollin and Louis Blanc, as well as by such extremists as Blanqui and Barbes, joined the bourgeois National Guard in a general uprising. The regular soldiers were mostly sympathetic towards the insurrection, and made no important resistance. Within two days the King abdicated and the revolutionaries invaded the Chamber of Deputies to demand a Republican Provisional Government. In the Chamber Lamartine, one of the Republicans' announced a list of Liberal members to form the new Administration, while at the offices of the revolutionary paper, *La Reforme*, another list was drawn up, consisting of Socialist politicians, and even one worker, Albert, while the Socialists seized the Prefecture of Police and the Post Office. Eventually a compromise was reached by the combination of the two lists. But the final result was a government with a right-wing Republican majority, and this fact was in due course to affect profoundly the course of events in the 1848 revolution in France.

At first there was almost complete unity among the revolutionaries, and in the early days the workers exercised a quite considerable influence, partly through the Socialist representatives in the Government, but more significantly through the innumerable revolutionary clubs which, under the leadership of men like Blanqui, Barbes, Cabet and Raspail, carried on the various Socialist ideals of Baboeuf, Saint-Simon, Fourier and Louis Blanc, and gave focus to the revolutionary aspirations of the people. Most of the working-class demonstrations during 1848 in Paris sprang at least partly from the discussions of the clubs, yet it is significant that, with the exception of Blanqui, most of the club leaders lost their influence in the years following the failures of 1848, and more influence was eventually wielded by a man who had never sought to set himself up as a group leader, P.-J. Proudhon, the most energetic and independent political journalist of 1848.

The Provisional Government immediately set out to conciliate the workers by a number of reforms. A ten-hour working day was decreed, and a somewhat vague "recognition of the Right to Work" was propounded. Undercutting of wages rates by prisons, convents and other institutions was forbidden, and the community accepted responsibility for industrial accidents, the Tuileries being set aside as a hospital for this purpose. Sub-contracting was abolished, and the old trade guilds were replaced by organisations of workers and employers for conciliation purposes.

But these mild reforms were overshadowed by the initiatives of the workers themselves. They had at first demanded a Ministry of Labour; this was refused by Lamartine and the other Republicans in the Government, but, through the intervention of Blanc and Albert, a "Commission for the Workers" was set up at the Luxembourg. Delegates were elected by each trade, and a kind of Soviet of three or four hundred members assembled, providing, for a time at least, a centre for working-class industrial activity of a radical nature, as opposed to the purely political aims and methods of most of the clubs, with their doctrinaire leaders and orators. By intervening to support strikers, the Luxembourg Commission managed to obtain minimum-wage rates in a number of industries. It encouraged the formation of trade unions among the workers, and also the very wide movement of voluntary co-operatives of producers, which sprang up in many Paris trades. Finally, it issued programmes calling somewhat vaguely for the replacement of capitalist control of industry by a kind of mutualist Socialism, and encouraged workers to offer themselves as candidates in the elections for the Assembly.

Undoubtedly the vigour and power of this organisation aroused much disquiet and jealousy among the bourgeois members of the Government. The reactionaries began to gather in order to combat what they justly regarded as this new threat to their interests, while early in March the right-wing members of the Government set up a scheme to counter the influence of the Luxembourg Commission by regimenting the unemployed into National Workshops, where they were drilled into a force which the Government hoped might be used against the independent and more militant workers grouped around the Luxembourg Commission. Once, indeed, the workers of the Ateliers Nationaux helped to break up a popular demonstration organised by the workers of the Luxembourg, but later, in the June days, they were to join very actively in the rising against the Government.

As an additional means of countering the influence of the Socialist revolutionaries, Lamartine formed, from the youths who had taken a somewhat hooligan part in the February Revolution, a kind of Janissary corps, the Garde Mobile, who were paid, drilled and disciplined to counter popular demonstrations or risings of the type by which he himself had come to power. This corps was to have a somewhat sinister place in French social history, and even today remains the most unpopular body in a country where nobody likes the police. Thus already, after the first few

days of enthusiastic brotherhood in the February revolution, that clash of forces which later brought a sorry end to the revolution was already becoming evident.

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Meanwhile, however, the news of the Paris revolution had an electric effect on the radical movements in the rest of Europe. The French revolutionaries maintained an internationalism, merely theoretical in the case of the middle-class liberals, but practical in the case of the more extreme Jacobins and Socialists. Lamartine, as Minister of Foreign Affairs, issued a manifesto to the other countries of Europe, which was guardedly internationalist, while at the same time showing a nationalist trend by denouncing the clauses of the 1815 treaty. But in practice the Provisional Government took a very cautious attitude, and Lamartine gave nothing more than fraternal phrases to the many deputations of European revolutionaries who came to petition him. Paris was full of foreign political refugees, and the revolution brought others flowing into this left-wing Mecca. But, although small expeditions of refugees were organised in France and crossed the frontiers into Italy, Germany and Belgium, they were not assisted in any material way by the Provisional Government, and their own plans were even frustrated by its acts. Only in the case of occasional individual agitators, like Bakunin, was any assistance given, and that was usually done secretly and in order to get rid of an embarrassingly subversive person.

However, although the French Republic never gave any material encouragement to insurrections abroad, the example of the February rising had a really stimulating effect throughout Europe between the Pyrenees and the frontiers of Russia. In Germany the discontent of the middle class began to manifest itself in action. In Italy the existing revolutionary movements were impelled to really desperate activity.

The previous year had already seen a stirring of organised opposition to the various German governments. In the Rhineland there were small groups of Socialists and Communists, among whom Marx was already prominent as the editor of the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*. But Marx and his associates played a very minor part in the revolutionary movements of 1848, which were essentially liberal and Pan-German in character. The German revolutionaries were divided into Moderate and Republican camps. The Moderates, led by von Gagern and Mathy, aimed merely at a federation of the German States which would not interfere with the sovereignty of the existing dynasties, and some kind of democratisation of their individual governments. The Republicans, led by Hecker and Struve, who had held a conference at Offenburg in November, 1847, put forward a more radical but essentially similar programme. They asked for a German parliament elected by universal suffrage, for freedom of Press and conscience, for trial by jury and a graduated income tax, for the responsibility of ministers and the abolition of Privileges. To these demands

they added a number of aspirations so imprecise as to be virtually meaningless, such as "Comfort, education and instruction for all", "Protection of labour and the right to work", and "Adjustment of the relations between capital and labour". Their chief characteristic was a certain swashbuckling wordiness, but for all practical purposes their programme was essentially a liberal one of the most cautious kind.

These groups had succeeded in organising very little really effective resistance, and it may be doubted whether, without the impetus of the Paris rebellion, they would have gone far beyond vague discussion and fruitless resolutions.

But the news from Paris stirred them into action. On February 27th, von Gagern, leader of the Moderates, brought forward a resolution in the Darmstadt Chamber for a German National Parliament. Mathy persuaded the Grand Duke of Baden to grant a democratic constitution, and the rest of the smaller princes followed suit. The mood of the German people was still so cautious that these moves effectively forestalled the Republicans.

But the really great events in the German revolution were to come later in the month. On March 13th in Vienna, the very stronghold of the Empire, the people—burgesses, students and workers together—rose and overturned the seemingly undefeatable regime of Metternich. That statesman went into exile for ever, remarking to his wife, "Yes, my dear, we are dead." The Emperor conceded the people's demands for constitutional government. A National Guard was formed, and on the day after the revolution the great censorship machine of the Empire was destroyed, while the Diet was summoned to meet shortly.

From Vienna the revolt spread to the other great stronghold of German reaction, and on March 18th the barricades went up in Berlin, the troops retired from the city, and the King made haste to submit to the demands of the revolutionaries. The Prince of Prussia, who was regarded with hatred by the population, fled to join Louis Philippe and Metternich in comparatively untroubled England, and the King granted the usual constitutional demands and a political amnesty, while a Liberal ministry was installed under Camphausen. On March 20th the King of Bavaria abdicated and Lola Montez fled from Germany; the first stage of the German revolution, so far as it went, was complete. The customary democratic freedoms and safeguards had been granted, the burden of feudalism was removed from the peasants, and German unity seemed to be carried a step nearer by the meeting on March 31st of the Vorparlament from the Estates of the various principalities. This body decided to convoke a National Assembly, based on universal suffrage, which it was expected would become the federal organ of the German nation, with the power to over-ride the will of princes, whether large or small.

In Italy the Paris revolution gave the impetus to a new wave of resistance. On March 10th, after wild demonstrations in the streets of Rome, the Pope granted a constitution and called in a government where churchmen were no longer pre-



ponderant. A few days later, when the news of the Vienna revolution reached Italy, the people of Milan rose in arms, and, after five days of very bitter fighting, drove the Austrians back to Verona. Venice rose on March 23rd, declaring a republic and taking possession of the Austrian arsenal and navy in their city. Willing to gain what he could from a unification of Italy, fearful of insurrection among his own subjects, and anxious to avoid trouble with the neighbouring revolutionaries in France, Charles Albert of Piedmont declared war on Austria and sent his army into Lombardy. Forced on by the demands of their subjects, even the Pope and the King of Naples sent expeditions to help the Piedmontese, though both of them later went back on their word, as soon as it seemed convenient to accept Austrian influence in preference to the revolutionary tendencies among their own people.

Meanwhile, even England had its revolutionary movement, though it assumed a somewhat farcical character. Chartism had been moribund for six years, since the failure of the Petition of 1842, but the news of the rising in Paris stirred up the remaining Chartists to new activity, and the existence of a certain amount of economic distress led the people in many parts of the country to express their discontent in riots and demonstrations, which reached very formidable proportions in Glasgow and Edinburgh. A new Convention was called, in order to present a further petition, and the creation of a revolutionary National Assembly was even proposed. But popular support for the Chartists had shrunk more than either their leaders or the Government imagined.

A great demonstration to present the petition was planned for April 10th, and the authorities, with their minds full of the examples of Paris, Vienna, Berlin and Rome, made elaborate and frightened precautions, calling many troops into London and recruiting from among the wealthier classes a great mass of special constables for duty on the day of the demonstration, among whom was Prince Louis Napoleon, very soon to become the final destroyer of the achievements of 1848 in France.

The demonstration, however, proved a complete fiasco. A small crowd gathered to hear the speeches, and the procession allowed itself to be halted by the cordons of police and troops at the Thames bridges. The day reached a silly conclusion, when the petition was delivered to the Houses of Parliament in three hansom cabs and was found on examination to contain less than two million names instead of the five or six millions boasted by the Chartist leaders. Moreover, many of the signatures were clearly bogus, since, it appeared, Queen Victoria and the Duke of Wellington were both signatories, the latter no less than seventeen times!

Thus the English revolutionary movement ended in an ignominious atmosphere of bathos and hoax, and the Government had no difficulty at all in suppressing the few physical-force Chartists who still tried to arm and drill themselves for an insurrection.

Similarly, the Young Ireland movement received an illusory impetus from the February rising, with almost as poor a conclusion as that of the Chartist movement. There was a great deal of revolutionary talk, and the various Nationalist newspapers published inflammatory articles calling for armed rebellion against the alien masters, and giving detailed instructions in the technique of insurrection and the manufacture of weapons and explosives. But the Irish population was as yet unprepared to give adequate support to a revolutionary movement. In June the most active of the revolutionary leaders, Mitchel, was arrested, and the movement soon collapsed, the remaining rebels of any importance being picked off by the authorities and transported. A few isolated riots and armed clashes took place, but these were completely frustrated by the weakness of the leaders, who preached fiery revolution but were, in general, too scared to carry it out or encourage it in others.

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The revolutionary impetus in Europe was of no long duration, and within two months it became evident that the upper middle class, having installed themselves in power, were unwilling that the revolutionary movements should go any further, and were not averse, in order to gain this end, from allying themselves with those remaining reactionaries who were not yet completely discredited.

Already, in France, a demonstration of the left, led by Blanqui and other club orators, was dispersed because Louis Blanc, the veteran Socialist, intervened on the side of "order" and persuaded the majority of the demonstrators to go home in peace. Blanc's right-wing associates regarded this as a triumph for their ends, and a fortnight later they issued a document, the *Piece Tascherau*, which purported to show that Blanqui had given information on subversive movements to the Orleanist police. If one considers Blanqui's inflexible character, as demonstrated in his single-minded and almost religiously fanatical career of conspiracy and repeated imprisonments, it is difficult to believe that this paper was anything other than a forgery, particularly as no evidence has been produced in corroboration. But it had the desired effect of alienating many revolutionaries from the individual whom the Liberals feared most, and this effect was assisted by the personal animosity which existed within the revolutionary ranks between Blanqui and the equally influential Barbes, his former friend.

The early part of April was devoted to a systematic propaganda against the revolutionary Left. The middle-class elements were consolidated, the working-class "fifth column" was fostered in the National Workshops and the Garde Mobile. By the middle of April the revolutionary tide in France had definitely turned. On the 16th of that month the workers' delegates of the Luxembourg organised a large but very peaceful demonstration to the Hotel de Ville. The authorities called on the National Guard and the men from the National Workshops, who appeared in large

numbers and broke up the demonstration shouting slogans against the "Communists". Another veteran Socialist leader, Ledru-Rollin, told the deputation which waited on him to go home and cause no more trouble, and thus, like his associate Louis Blanc, played his part in frustrating the movement which he himself claimed to lead.

A few days later the elections took place, and the Right secured a large majority of the seats, particularly in the peasant districts. The Party of Order, a heterogeneous combination of royalists and conservative republicans, gained the ascendancy, and they were not slow to pursue their advantage. When the workers of Rouen held a demonstration four days later to complain of the manipulation of the polls, the National Guards shot them down. The Parisian revolutionaries were incensed by this act, but the new Assembly went so far as to elect as its own vice-president the officer responsible for the massacre. It was, furthermore, decreed that no more petitions should be presented.

The Parisian workers were disgusted at the trend which events were taking, and, after the Luxembourg Commission had held its last meeting on May 13th, they began to think of open demonstrations of their discontent. Two days later, the clubs organised a demonstration, ostensibly to present a petition for aid to Poland, but really to make a show of strength in the Paris streets in defiance of the Assembly's ban. After invading the Chamber and proclaiming its dissolution, the demonstrators went back to the Hotel de Ville, where they elected a new Provisional Government. The various versions of the list included the names of all the leading figures who stood in opposition to the Assembly, such as Blanqui, Barbes, Caussidiere, Flocon, Ledru-Rollin, Proudhon, Cabet, Raspail and Louis Blanc, but it is unlikely that all of these willingly allowed their names to be used, particularly as Louis Blanc and Ledru-Rollin still tried their best to compromise with the Right, while Proudhon always held himself aloof from the leaders of the clubs, whose names made up the list. The Provisional Government was short-lived, for Lamartine and his associates called out the bourgeois National Guard, who dispersed the unarmed demonstrators and arrested their leaders. Caussidiere, head of the Paris police, and Courtois, general of the National Guard, were dismissed because they did not attack the demonstrators.

The conflict between the two sections into which the movement of February had split now became more intense than ever. The Assembly, thinking that it had completely consolidated its ground and, by arresting the club leaders, eliminated the possibility of any further rising, proceeded to attack the National Workshops, which it was felt had served the purpose intended by Lamartine and his associates and could now be regarded as a mere waste of money. On May 24th, Trelat drew up instructions that all workers who refused to join the armed forces or to take work with an outside employer should be dismissed from the workshops. Emile Thomas,

the director of the workshops and himself an enemy of the Socialists, protested against the folly of such a decree, but he was silenced by the simple device of kidnapping and transporting him secretly to Bordeaux. After a month's delay the decree was finally issued, with additional provisions abolishing the bureau for giving assistance to the needy and the medical service for workers.

Naturally, the workers who had fought for the revolution in February were not likely to accept such an attack on their livelihood without any protest, and on June 22nd a deputation of them waited on the Government. They received threats in answer, and returned to the working-class areas to prepare for insurrection. By next morning the barricades had risen all over the eastern part of Paris, and the workers, without any leader, had begun the fiercest struggle up to that time in the revolutionary history of France.

Cavaignac, the commander of the Government forces, had withdrawn his troops from the disaffected quarters, with the deliberate intention of allowing the insurrection to grow to its greatest proportions in order to crush completely and finally the revolutionary Left. He then mounted an irresistible attack with large contingents of the Army, as well as the National Guard and the Garde Mobile. The struggle lasted four days, and the workers fought by themselves, with no allies among the middle classes or even among the Socialist leaders, most of whom were in prison or, like Louis Blanc, had no great desire to become too actively involved in real revolutionary struggle. A hostile French historian, de la Gorce, has said of the insurrectionaries:

"To whatever side we turn we find no general direction. The engineers of La Chapelle, who were hidden in the Clos St. Lazare, the brigadiers of the National Workshops, who could be seen behind the barricades in the Faubourg St. Antoine with their cards in their hats and their ribbons in their buttonholes, the old Montagnards, assembled in the Faubourg du Temple or the Faubourg Saint-Jacques, a few deluded old soldiers who loaded the weapons of the least experienced insurgents and commanded the firing on the troops—these were the leaders of sedition, subordinate and unknown leaders, selected for the most part by chance—yet not therefore contemptible, since, unlike more famous demagogues, they had the merit of knowing how to die."

The slaughter was enormous, and the brutality with which the victors acted was extremely savage, prisoners being shot in batches without trial or examination. The Socialist revolution was defeated, and it would be many years before the working class again played any significant part in French affairs. The Assembly could return in peace to its work of undoing the achievements of February.

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The June days represented a major setback to revolutionary aims throughout Europe. Everywhere the more conservative elements began to take the lead. In Ger-

many the princes and their ministers gained confidence, in Italy such reactionaries as the King of Naples began to resume their despotic power and to revoke the constitutions they had granted when the popular uprisings first made them retreat in panic. The most significant effect was that, after June, the European revolution began to lose its social character and to become more nationalist. The nationalist revolutions in Hungary and Italy survived for more than a year after the Paris revolution, with its social basis, had virtually ended.

From June onwards the interest shifts almost wholly to the Austrian Empire and its spheres of influence, Germany, Italy and Hungary, and becomes increasingly centred on the attempt by the Emperor and the petty despots of Germany and Italy to regain the power which they had lost in the fall of Metternich.

The radical movement in Germany began to decline as soon as the inspiration of Paris was removed. In April Hecker had made another rising in Baden, but was again defeated, and in May there had been demonstrations in Vienna which forced the Emperor to promise a constitution and depart to the safety of Innsbruck. But when the Frankfurt Assembly finally met on May 18th, its conservative character soon became evident, and this was confirmed when the Archduke John of Austria was elected Regent of the German empire. Very soon the Frankfurt Assembly was encouraging nationalist aggressions against the Danes, and supporting the Emperor in his campaigns against the Italians, the Hungarians and the Slavs. During its whole life, this Assembly devoted itself to wordy discussion and achieved almost nothing; when at last, in March, 1849, it awoke and announced its constitution to be the law of Germany, the gesture was many months too late, and its Rump, deprived of the conservative majority, died uselessly on its ignominious expulsion from Wurtemberg in June, 1849. Nevertheless, while in itself the Assembly was almost completely useless, it has some historical significance as a precursor of the later movements for a united Germany which ended in the hegemony of Prussia—an event anticipated by the Assembly when it offered the crown of Germany to the Hohenzollerns.

The various subject races of the Austrian empire were late in joining the revolutionary movement, and their role was for the most part reactionary in its effect. In Hungary, as we have said, the revolution remained in the hands of the landowners and the upper middle class, and it was to a Diet of noblemen that the Emperor granted a constitution after the March rising in Vienna had made him feel insecure enough to wish to placate any potential ally. And, for the time being at least, this act stood him in good stead, since during its early days the Hungarian movement remained monarchical and the Republican agitation of men like Perczel had little effect. Indeed, so loyal were the Hungarians to the Emperor, and so little were they willing to understand other peoples who fought for national freedom, that in June, 1848, they actually sent an army to assist in subjugating Lombardy and Venetia.

The acquisition of partial autonomy only increased the nationalist tendencies of the Magyars, and made their rule more intolerable to the Serbs, Croats and Roumanians included within their territories. In May, 1848, there was a general rising of these peoples, of a racial rather than a social character, and for the rest of its existence independent Hungary was beset by revolutions among its subject peoples which might have been placated by a less haughty treatment on the part of the ruling race. But, as it was, the Slavs and Roumanians, incensed by the treatment they received, allowed themselves to be used as tools by the Austrian Government, which maintained a pretence of impartiality towards the differences between the Hungarians and their subjects, but which in fact secretly encouraged all these races, and particularly the Croats, in their rebellion.

The Slavs, in fact, play an unhappy part in the history of the European revolution. There was, indeed, one genuine Slav movement of revolt against the Austrian Government, when, on June 15th, the morrow of a Pan-Slav conference, the people of Prague, supported by a number of Polish and Russian revolutionaries, including Bakunin, who happened to have reached that city during his travels, rose and drove out the Austrian troops. But the revolt was soon crushed, and from that time the Slav movements fell into the hands of bourgeois Nationalists who were willing to play the Emperor's game of divide-and-rule, in the hope of gaining some kind of autonomy, which, in fact, they never achieved.

During the late summer of 1848 the Emperor began to feel sufficiently confident to return to autocratic methods, so much did events appear to have turned to his advantage. On August 5th Milan had fallen and Charles Albert had withdrawn his forces to Piedmont, leaving the Venetian Republic as the only unconquered part of Northern Italy. Less than three weeks later a clash between the National Guard and the unemployed workers in Vienna had shown that the Austrian revolutionary movement was suffering from a similar division to that which had destroyed the revolution in Paris. In September, the Croats, with the tacit approval of the Emperor, began to advance into Hungary, and on October 3rd Ferdinand announced the annulment of the Hungarian constitution and appointed Jellachich, Ban of Croatia, the military ruler of Hungary, a calculated insult to the pride of the Magyar aristocracy, who had always regarded the Croats as an inferior race. Austrian troops began to assemble for the expedition against Hungary.

But Ferdinand had calculated without one factor, the citizens of Vienna, who stand out in the history of 1848 as the only people who were willing to sacrifice themselves for the freedom of another revolution. On October 6th the workers and students rose, the Minister of War was hanged from a lamp-post, and the Emperor fled in terror. But the next day Windischgratz began to collect an army of Slavs, and by October 23rd he had surrounded the city. The Hungarians made a halfhearted attempt to relieve the Viennese, but were defeated outside the walls,

and there followed a general assault on the rebel garrison, which terminated by the fall of Vienna on November 1st and the end of the Austrian revolution. Austria returned to its autocratic government, and, after Ferdinand's abdication in December and the accession of Francis Joseph to the imperial throne, the Diet, which had maintained a nominal existence for some months, was dissolved in March, 1849, and Austria retired temporarily from German affairs.

Nevertheless, the revolution had not been wholly fruitless, for, unlike the German States, the Austrian authorities made no attempt to re-impose feudalism on the peasants.

At the same time, the current of events led the King of Prussia to adopt a changed attitude towards the Assembly to which he had previously deferred, and, supported by the Liberals who had climbed to office in the revolution earlier in the year, he decided to dissolve this institution.

The members of the Assembly made a show of resistance, but, when Wrangel's troops appeared before Berlin, they were allowed to enter the city without hindrance, and the Assembly was finally dispersed, its members recommending a campaign of non-payment of taxes which met little response.

The revolution was in full retreat, for the following month Louis Napoleon, after a demagogic campaign aided by the excesses of the Royalists and the right-wing conservatives, became President of France, supported largely by the votes of French workers who had lost trust in Socialists like Ledru-Rollin and who mistakenly thought that by voting for Napoleon they were avenging themselves on Cavaignac and the Right. In this, as in many other points, the career of Napoleon resembled those of the modern dictators.

The early part of 1849 saw a new reversal of fortunes for the Austrian Empire. From January to March the Imperial armies fighting in Hungary met with continual defeats, while new insurrections broke out in Italy. On February 6th the people of Tuscany rose, and, after the flight of the Grand Duke, proclaimed a republic. Three days later there was a rebellion in Rome, the Pope fled to Neapolitan territory, and the Republic was founded.

The Roman rising was somewhat different from the previous insurrections, since it was inspired by Mazzini, the great idealist of the Italian revolution, who had never before enjoyed the chance of putting his ideas into practice. Mazzini was not a socialist, but he strongly opposed large-scale capitalism and landlordism, and his movement had such deep roots in the working class that in later years he was a serious rival of Marx and Bakunin for influence in the International. During the six months of the Roman Republic, Mazzini's disinterested administration and Garibaldi's dashing defensive tactics brought about a unity among the Roman people which was only equalled by that of the sister republic of Venice.

The events in Tuscany and Rome led Charles Albert of Piedmont to decide that if he wished to retain any influence in Italy he must act quickly, and on March 12th he again declared war on Austria and advanced into Lombardy.

The new insurrections in Italy and the successes of the Magyar armies in Hungary and Transylvania led the Emperor of Austria to the desperate measure of calling in the assistance of his fellow autocrat, the Tsar of Russia, to re-establish the integrity of his Empire. This signalled the beginning of a really concerted attack by the new alliance of autocrats and the upper bourgeoisie on the remnants of the revolutionary achievements in Europe. The Austrians, assisted by the Russians in Hungary, were enabled to defeat the Piedmontese at Novara and thus suppress once again the revolution in Lombardy. Meanwhile, the French sent an expedition to Italy. Nominally, this was to assist the Roman Republic and halt the southward march of the Austrian troops, but in fact it represented a move against the Republic, and this was made clear by General Oudinot's aggressive actions. De Lesseps was sent to enquire into complaints concerning Oudinot's conduct, but, when an even more reactionary Assembly was elected on May 29th, de Lesseps was recalled and Oudinot's role in Italy became clear. After desperate fighting in the outskirts of Rome, the French army entered the city on July 3rd, and on the 15th of that month the Papal Government returned to Rome. The French Republic had destroyed the Roman Republic and installed an autocrat in its place.

Encouraged by the general tendency, the princes of Germany began to attack what remained of the revolution in their territories. On April 12th, as I have already mentioned, the Frankfurt Assembly performed its one act of real defiance by declaring its constitution to be the law of Germany. The Chambers of Prussia, Hanover and Saxony decided to uphold this decision, and were immediately dissolved by their respective rulers, the King of Prussia calling on all the States to revise in an autocratic direction the constitutions which had been granted during the risings in the previous year. The German upper bourgeoisie had already consolidated their position as allies of the old aristocracy, and it was left for the petty bourgeoisie to make what resistance they could. In April there were risings in the Rhineland and Saxony, both of which were crushed by Prussian troops. Dresden put up a stubborn defence, among the fighters being Richard Wagner and, once again, Bakunin, who was arrested here and began his decade of rigorous imprisonment in the dungeons of Saxony, Austria and Russia. Dresden fell on May 9th, and the next day there began a revolt in Baden and the Palatinate. A Republic was declared in these provinces, and for more than two months the rebels resisted; it was the first time that any really effective resistance had been made to reaction in Germany, but it also failed when the last citadel of Rastatt fell on July 23rd, and the German revolution was at an end.



The months of August and September saw the two desperate last stands of the 1848 through 1849 revolutionaries. The first was in Italy. After the revolutions in every other part of that country had been crushed, the Republic of Venice continued to fight on, maintaining, under the leadership of a Jewish lawyer, Daniele Manin, a great unity of classes in the struggle to retain its ancient independence. Cut off from the rest of Italy and from any hope of assistance from outside, the Venetians resisted until it was no longer physically possible, until the last day's food had been eaten, the last ammunition had been consumed, and cholera had reached epidemic proportions. No city showed such a unanimous desire to maintain its essential liberties as did Venice throughout the whole period of the 1848 through 1849 revolution; it seemed as if the spirit of the medieval free cities had been here re-born and brought to a late flowering.

If Venice represented the last stand of the democrats in 1848, in Hungary the nationalist aristocracy carried on for a month longer. In April 1849, the Hungarians had finally declared their independence of the Austrian Emperor, and formed themselves into a Republic under the leadership of Louis Kossuth. The circumstance that led a revolution of landowners to abandon their dynastic loyalties had been what seemed to them the final treachery by which their King had called in a foreign autocrat to help in their suppression. For some months they carried on a great campaign of cavalry warfare, but in the end they were no match for the alliance of Austrians, Russians, Roumanians, Croats and Serbs. Moreover, they were split by internal dissensions, since many of their leaders, including the commanding general, Gorgei, found it hard to give up their monarchical ideas, and seem to have fought half-heartedly after Hungary became a republic. On August 11th the Provisional Government abdicated, and Kossuth fled the country, to enter on a life of picturesque exile in England. Two days later the main army, under Gorgei, surrendered at Villagos, and the Austrian General Haynau, who had already made himself notorious for his barbarities in Lombardy, instituted a rigorous process of shooting and hanging. Isolated bands of Hungarians continued to carry on a hopeless struggle against their enemies, and it was not until September 26th, six weeks after the collapse of the main forces, a month after the capitulation of Venice, that the last stronghold of the revolutions of 1848 through 1849, the Hungarian fortress of Komorn, fell to the Imperial armies.

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The period of revolution was ended, and a new period of reaction began in Europe, with Napoleon III and Bismarck taking the places of Guizot and Metternich. Some of the political movements of 1848 were to achieve a partial though twisted fulfillment at the hands of these new autocrats. German unity was achieved in a subordination of the remaining provinces to Prussian hegemony, an end hardly desired by the original Pan-Germans. Slav unity was to become a political weapon

in the hands of the Russian Tsars, and in our own day has been achieved as much by force as by persuasion. Italian nationalism resulted in a unification of Italy under the Piedmontese royal house which did not accord with the original ambitions of Mazzini and Garibaldi. Most of the demands of the Chartists were gained in the ensuing century, but their attainment has not eliminated the need for radical struggles in other fields.

But the actual insurrections of 1848 do not loom so large in our vision today as the political and social tendencies which the revolution initiated. The movements of 1848, frustrated as they may have been in their achievements, were accompanied by a crystallisation of the political ideas which were later to become foundations for important social movements. Here it is sufficient to sketch them briefly.

The appearance of Marxist Communism, as a clearly defined political creed and the basis of a social movement, dates from 1848, for Marx's *Communist Manifesto*, although it may have been written late in 1847 and published a month before the outbreak of the Paris rising, was essentially motivated by the same spirit of revolt as provoked the various European uprisings. Neither Marx personally nor the *Communist Manifesto* had any great influence on the events of 1848; their time was to come in the following years when the workers had largely turned away from Jacobinism towards a more specifically working-class creed. Marx's influence was at first strongest among the German workers, but even there it was shared by another Socialist, who gave active sympathy to the risings of 1848, Ferdinand Lassalle, the founder of the Social-democratic movement in Germany.

In the Latin and Slav countries the influence of Marx was late in becoming evident, and here the characteristic movements of the latter half of the nineteenth century stemmed from the ideas of other participants in the 1848 risings. In France the revolutionary movement subsequent to 1849 was divided mostly between the supporters of Blanqui, the founder of a species of extreme Baboeuism and advocate of revolutionary dictatorship (he initiated the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat ") and those of Proudhon, who, as an independent journalist, had subjected the events of 1848 to an acute criticism in his successive newspapers, all in their turn suppressed by the authorities. Proudhon denounced governmental institutions, and demanded the elimination of accumulated property. Under his influence a large mass of the French workers turned aside from political conspiracy into industrial organisation, and Syndicalism owed much to his teaching. During the Paris Commune of 1871 the rebels were mostly divided between the followers of Blanqui and those of Proudhon, while in its early days the Proudhonians were as influential in the First International as the Marxists.

Proudhon was the first continental anarchist, but the creation of an organised anarchist movement, which later played a very great part in social unrest in Latin Europe, Russia, Bulgaria and the United States, was undertaken by another active

participant in the 1848 revolutions, Michael Bakunin. Although Bakunin had already absorbed Proudhon's ideas during 1848, his main preoccupation in these days was a kind of revolutionary pan-Slavism. When, however, he escaped to Europe after his decade of imprisonment, with his ideals of 1848 still unharmed, he entered the revolutionary movement of the 1860s as a declared anarchist, and led the strongest opposition to Marx in the International. This organisation eventually split into Marxist and Anarchist wings, and the anarchists remained the most important group in Spain, as well as for many years playing an influential part in the French, Italian, Russian and American working-class movements.

Another Russian whom 1848 set irrevocably on a revolutionary course was Alexander Herzen. A confirmed sceptic, and a very ironical observer of the shortcomings of the 1848 revolutionaries, Herzen almost unwillingly retained his ideals, and in the following decade founded a Russian emigre paper, *The Bell*, through which he wielded a greater influence than any other single person on the development of a Russian liberal and revolutionary movement against the Tsarist autocracy.

In Italy the influence of Mazzini was for some years very great in the revolutionary movement, but after the unification it gave place to the more definite social ideas of the socialists and anarchists.

In Ireland the farcical failure of 1848 prepared the way for a stronger nationalist movement, which, under the Fenians, brought a really effective opposition to the British rule. In England, with the discrediting of Chartism, the workers turned back to the Trade Union ideas which had been so influential in the 1830s and for a long period, except for the comparatively slight activities of the Christian Socialists, the discontent of the working class was directed into channels of industrial organisation.

But, if the influences of 1848 are to be found in all the left-wing movements of today, in Socialism, Communism, Anarchism, Trade Unionism, they are also present among the Right. Napoleonic Cesarism sprang from 1848, and Louis Napoleon became the first of the modern dictators, by the use of methods which closely anticipated those of Hitler and Mussolini. The nationalist movements of 1848 found their perverted conclusion in Nazism and Fascism, the pan-Germans, in particular, being almost as violent as the Nazis in their denunciation of the inferior races and their desire to maintain the German hegemony over a whole range of subject peoples.

A century of crowded political events has passed since "the year of revolutions". Yet we still live under the influence of the happenings of that time, and still, in our own day, are witnessing the fulfillment, usually in an ironically perverted form, of the ideals for which the men of 1848 fought, often futilely, and never more than half-realising the significance of their acts.

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George Woodcock  
1848 The Year of Revolutions  
1948

A Hundred Years of Revolution: 1848 And After, edited by George Woodcock  
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