

How enduring were the changes created by the 1848 revolutions?

[History](#), [Revolution](#)



In 1848 Europe lived a time of uneasiness. Many revolts took place all over the continent, when the middle and working class? The only ones lucky enough to escape from revolution were England and Russia. France was under the power of Louis Philippe, a reactionary monarch who was against change. The Austrian Empire ruled by Metternich even though Ferdinand was the actual king. A lack of political change and social reforms bothered the people as the population increased.

Education was available for more people but the economic system started to fail. revolutions took place in 1848 in Austria-Hungary, France and Germany. As a result the 1848 revolutions only left temporal alternations to the traditional system and ended up being a transfer of power. France as the most influential nation of all European nations had a strong liberal force, which opposed to the fact of being ruled by Louis Philippe. The French middle-class complained for the permanent rejection, and discrimination from the government, as they had no representation at all.

After the army had killed 40 protestors, a crowd of discontent middle and working class was already on their way to the city, hours later broke Paris into open revolt. Noticing that it was already too late, Louis Philippe abdicated forcing the Parisians to create a provisional government. This short-term solution became an alliance between the middle class liberals, and the radical working classes. This coalition turned into a clear victory over the Monarchs, which wouldn't last long, before several problems arose due to different interests and ideas each group held.

What occurred was that the middle class, principally conformed by intellectuals, doctors, minor employers, etc, wanted several changes that were mainly based on their social interests, (e. g. the voting system, and the freedom of speech) above anything else. The working classes not only had the same interests, but also had others that extended to the economic side, which for the middle class wasn't as important. When the social interests from the middle class were partially reformed they didn't have much more to protest about, so they instead retired.

This caused a huge discontent within the working classes that still expected other changes and weren't being supported by the middle class that had already achieved most of their purposes. Many changes took place in those first months the most important one was the instauration of the universal male suffrage that allowed men over 21 to vote. This increased the number of voters from 240, 000 to almost 9 million. Other changes like the reduction of the working hours to 11 hours, and the opening of workhouses were made to help the unemployed.

Thanks to these changes people from the provinces could get involved with what had been going around in Paris. The majority of the voters were people from the rural areas, and as a result the elections for the constituent assembly were in favor of moderate republicans or the conservative monarchs. The revolutionaries had won, in November 1849 during the second republic Louis Napoleon became president by popular election. Two months before the elections the 12 hour working day had been re-established, however the universal male suffrage still remained.

In 1848 the Austrians heard from the revolutions in France and how successful they had been. Encouraged by this racial and social tensions as well as imperial repression of rights would influence revolts in the Habsburg Empire. Very similar to what happened in France forced by Ferdinand, Metternich who was in charge had to leave. Revolutionaries won but they had many disagreements between each other. What happened was that at the beginning both the middle class and the working class needed reforms. When these had been made middle class were satisfied but the working class felt that the Empire was still in debt with them.

For this reason the unity came to an end. For the middle class the fact of having freedom of press, tax reforms, and an increase in freedom of religion was enough. The people still demanded to exclude non-Hungarian soldiers from the Hungarian army. This became possible once Ferdinand decided that Hungary should be an independent country. In Austria finally one of the constitutional changes established (the March laws) were approved, the nobility would lose their tax exemptions and the feudal system was abolished from the Empire.

Due to the fact that the radicals and the liberals had very different interests there was also a nationalist conflict between certain groups amongst the empire. However the change that would endure the most after the civil revolt was the one that would eventually harm the revolution. This change had been dictated by the constituent assembly, and it was the abolition of serfdom (a member of the lowest feudal class bound to the land and owned

by a lord). As a result the revolutionaries would be left without any real support from the peasantry, as they would have no cause to complain.

Like the Habsburg Empire, Germany was also lead by the incidents that took place in France. In this case German States fell into a greater economic crisis than France. It seemed to be that reforms were simply one of the elements that the insurgents required and beside it came the acceptance of a concession which Prussia, Bavaria, Baden, and Wurttemberg agreed to. A meeting in Heidelberg (Vorparlament) was called to supervise the election to the German Representative Assembly.

This assembly was formed not to impose their power, but to act upon the lack of it, a characteristic of March 1848. The assembly was mainly elected by the middle class, and one of the first measures that it took into consideration was the Universal Male Suffrage, with the support of one delegate for every 50, 000 Germans. Germany had the urgency of finding someone appropriate to take control over all the state, and thought that the Habsburgs, a very important and well-known Germanfamily, lead by the Archduke John could be a good choice.

In June the Habsburgs took control over Germany. For many working class Germans the poor less job that the Frankfurt Parliament had done to solve their problems didn't satisfy them. They thought that within meetings they could discuss many economic problems and find the appropriate solution to each one of them. Their requests were then brought up and demanded changes like: the limitation of the factory production, restrictions upon free

economic and industrial growth, and the protection of the privileges for the old artisan guilds.

The protests that took place afterwards were very big and in some cases the Parliament had to recruit Prussian and Austrian troops. Eventually the emergence of the national issue and the fear of working class violence, created the route to the re-establishment of the German Government, including the return of Friederich Wilhelm. The German troops helped by the Prussians and the Austrians were sent into Berlin. Once again Friederich Wilhelm was offered to wear the German Crown and he refused. Not accepting the German crown was enough to end with Frankfurt Parliaments big failure.

Once the Austrian and Prussian delegates had left the Parliament it was dismissed by Prussian troops. At the end of the revolution some agrarian reforms still remained but in remark the liberal, constitutional revolution failed to succeed. We may clearly rely on A. J. P. Taylor who says: " There was merely a vacuum in which the liberals postured until the vacuum was filled" Big revolutions took place in France, Austria-Hungary, and Germany in 1848. The government systems had been there for a very long time, each nation and the people wanted several reforms on those systems were becoming a huge pain.

In France everything seemed to work fine, until Louis Napoleon declared himself Emperor. Terminating with the Universal Male Suffrage, which as other changes was thought to be enduring, but at the end it didn't result as

expected. In Austria-Hungary even though problems weren't that bad, the fact that the results of the revolution in France had been successful, was enough for them to demand changes. The changes that took place were thanks to Lajos Kossuth and the " March Laws". In Germany as discussed before, some say that the German disturbances cant even be considered as a revolution.

At the end only Agrarian reforms survived out of the many changes expected. Many protestors didn't receive anything from the revolution that took me to the conclusion that it wasn't successful at all. Finally we can see how the 1848 revolutions failed, and how changes and reforms were not enduring at all. As Trevely says: " 1848 was the turning point at which modern history failed to turn". However France was in a much better situation than all the other countries, and like in 1918 at the end of the WW1 they were capable of surviving ahead from the others.