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## A Sense of a European Present and its Passing during the Revolutions of 1848

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### Abstract

This article explores the temporality of revolution in 1848. It argues that what united the various revolutionary movements of that year was a sense of participating in a common European ‘present’, in which old imperial hierarchies collapsed and every cause and people seemed to exist in the same historical moment. The significance of that sense of the present was visible across the continent, but it was of greatest significance in the revolutionary theatres beyond the core imperial centres, and it was those places that would suffer first when that present passed. Too much ‘history’ was taking place at once, and as events in different settings followed their own particular courses, minds turned away from a European project. As European unity faltered, it was the representatives of imperial counter-revolution who demonstrated their ability to think strategically on a continent-wide level. They defeated the various movements, which had promised a better European present, and deferred improvements to the future. By doing so, they returned the peoples of the continent to their own particular – rather than common European – ‘nows’.

**Keywords:** Revolution; Europe; Temporality; Politics; 1848; Empire; Nation

Dumitru Brătianu spoke extemporaneously. He did not need notes to capture the spirit of the age in the early days of 1848, that year of European revolutionary upheaval, and so when a friend asked whether he could publish the text of Brătianu’s speech in his Bucharest gazette during the summer, Brătianu had to reproduce it from memory. Neither man could recall the precise date of the speech. The newspaper editor was not even present when it was delivered, but he had heard the praise of others who were. Standing before his audience in the meeting rooms of the Society of Romanian Students in Paris at 3 Place

de la Sorbonne, the twenty-nine-year-old Brătianu wondered whether ‘we can have only memories and aspirations’. There were men, he said, who considered the present to be an ‘illusion’, who argued that ‘we should seek only the future, that we should not occupy ourselves with the present, that mankind has only a past and a future, and that the present does not exist’. Brătianu had one word to describe this attitude: ‘sophism’. He could not fathom how those men could say that the present was a fiction, most particularly ‘today, when all of mankind is entering into a struggle that was unknown in past times’.<sup>1</sup>

By 1848, the historical significance of ‘revolution’ was well established. As Timothy Tackett has argued, the men who gathered in Versailles for the Estates General of 1789 did not believe that they were revolutionaries engaged in revolution; it was the course of events that made them so. They did not have a revolutionary ‘script’ to hand, but their successors in the mid-nineteenth century would.<sup>2</sup> These people knew what revolution meant. After posters appeared on Palermo walls in early January 1848, promising that a revolution would take place on King Ferdinand II’s birthday (12 January), the people of the city turned out to see history in the making. The presence of so many bodies in the streets spooked the soldiers sent to maintain order, and when a shot was fired, popular indignation fulfilled the poster’s promise: a revolution began. It was not the first to take place in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. Several states beyond France could claim a revolutionary heritage before 1848. A revolutionary wave crossed the Mediterranean in the 1820s, affecting Portugal, Spain, the Italian states and Greece, while the Polish and the Belgians would follow another French revolution in 1830, heightening the anxieties of European state officials who worried what might happen if the cause of revolution were allowed to spread unchecked.<sup>3</sup> In the spring of 1848, it carried farther, faster, and many of those who witnessed and participated in this historical moment recognised and understood its importance as a European event.

The revolutionary objectives of 1848 varied between theatres and movements, but all were united by what one of Brătianu’s friends would later call the European ‘occasion’.<sup>4</sup> Historians have long debated the extent to which events in 1848 could be considered ‘European’. Hartmut Pogge von

<sup>1</sup> The text of Brătianu’s speech was published in *Pruncul Român* on 29 July, 1848. It was reproduced in Ioan C. Brătianu (ed.), *Anul 1848 în Principatele Române: Acte și Documente publicate cu ajutorul Comitetului pentru Rădicarea Monumentului* (6 vols., Bucharest, 1902–10), I, 61–73.

<sup>2</sup> Timothy Tackett, *Becoming a Revolutionary: The Deputies of the French National Assembly and the Emergence of a Revolutionary Culture (1789–1790)* (Princeton, NJ, 1996); on revolutionary ‘scripts’, see Keith Michael Baker and Dan Edelstein (eds.), *Scripting Revolution: A Historical Approach to the Comparative Study of Revolutions* (Stanford, CA, 2015).

<sup>3</sup> On the 1820s, see Maurizio Isabella, *Southern Europe in the Age of Revolutions* (Princeton, NJ, 2023); Mark Mazower, *The Greek Revolution: 1821 and the Making of Modern Europe* (2021); for the 1830s, see Clive H. Church, *Europe in 1830: Revolution and Political Change* (1983); on fears of revolution see Beatrice de Graaf, *Fighting Terror after Napoleon: How Europe Became Secure after 1815* (Cambridge, 2020); Beatrice de Graaf et al. (eds.), *Securing Europe after Napoleon: 1815 and the New European Security Culture* (Cambridge, 2019); Adam Zamoyski, *Phantom Terror: The Threat of Revolution and the Repression of Liberty, 1789–1848* (2014).

<sup>4</sup> Nicolae Bălcescu, ‘Mersul revoluției în istoria românilor’, in Nicolae Bălcescu, *Opere*, ed. Gheorghe Zane (4 vols., Bucharest, 1961–86), II, 107–13.

Strandmann questioned whether the description makes sense given that ‘only four major countries – France, Germany, the Habsburg empire, and Italy – were directly involved’.<sup>5</sup> Both his insistence on ‘major’ countries and his use of the term ‘country’ seem misguided. Neither an Italian nor a German state existed in 1848, while the Habsburg empire stretched across much of the continent, covering territory in today’s Austria, Italy, Hungary, Czechia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Poland, Romania, Ukraine, Serbia and Croatia. As Miles Taylor has shown, there were also uprisings in British-controlled territories, such as the Greek Ionian Islands, and the Ottoman and Russian empires were implicated, too, by events in the principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia.<sup>6</sup> This European scope was well captured in the lithographer Franz Werner’s ‘Political Map of Europe’ (Figure 1), which shows a continent overrun with people, many of them armed, on horseback, or waving flags. Perhaps this continental scale was the reason that the revolutions of 1848, like those of 1989, came to be known by the year in which they took place.<sup>7</sup> Their geographical extent was so great that time became the defining factor.

Like Brătianu, many participants and observers believed that Europe was entering a shared revolutionary present, and this belief both influenced events and their historical interpretation. Mike Rapport has suggested that the revolutions of 1848 were European in ‘the sense that they were genuinely spontaneous across the continent’, while Christopher Clark has described the ‘revolutionary spring’ as the ‘only truly European revolution that there has ever been’.<sup>8</sup> Both of these interpretations have merit, but each one misses something out. Although almost every revolutionary outbreak was ‘spontaneous’ rather than ‘planned’ by some secret committee, none occurred in a vacuum. Participants were influenced by events elsewhere. And while Clark’s assessment would have appealed to many revolutionary activists, it also obscures something inadvertently captured by von Strandmann’s doubt: the sense that European states, nations and territories existed within a civilisational hierarchy, divided between the ‘Enlightened’ core and those on the peripheries who lagged behind.<sup>9</sup> The German conceptual historian Reinhart Koselleck classified this temporal difference as the *Gleichzeitigkeit des Ungleichzeitigen*, which has variously been translated as the ‘simultaneity of

<sup>5</sup> Hartmut Pogge von Strandmann, ‘1848–1849: A European Revolution?’, in *The Revolutions in Europe 1848–1849: From Reform to Reaction*, ed. R. J. W. Evans and Hartmut Pogge von Strandmann (Oxford, 2000), 1–8, at 2.

<sup>6</sup> Miles Taylor, ‘The 1848 Revolutions and the British Empire’, *Past and Present*, 166 (2000), 146–80; on Wallachia, see James Morris, ‘Locating the Wallachian Revolution of 1848’, *Historical Journal*, 64 (2021), 606–25.

<sup>7</sup> Both these revolutions have been considered ‘revolutions of the intellectuals’, too. See Lewis Namier, *1848: The Revolution of the Intellectuals* (1946); Ivan Krastev and Stephen Holmes, *The Light that Failed: A Reckoning* (2019), 23.

<sup>8</sup> Mike Rapport, *1848: Year of Revolution* (2009), 410; Christopher Clark, *Revolutionary Spring: Fighting for a New World, 1848–1849* (2023), 1.

<sup>9</sup> See Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford, CA, 1994); Maria Todorova, ‘The Trap of Backwardness: Modernity, Temporality, and the Study of Eastern European Nationalism’, *Slavic Review*, 64 (2005), 140–64.



**Figure 1.** Franz Werner, 'Political Map of Europe'.

the nonsimultaneous' or the 'contemporaneity of the noncontemporaneous'.<sup>10</sup> A combination of these two renderings seems most apposite: the 'simultaneity of the noncontemporaneous'. Two events could take place at the same time, or simultaneously, but that did not mean they shared something in common, or were contemporaneous. Before 1848, few in Europe believed that the continent existed or even could exist in the same historical moment. As Stuart Woolf has argued, 'by 1789 the leading role of France in the forward march of civilisation was accepted by educated elites throughout Europe'. Other peoples had to follow suit, which meant that the 'integration' of Europe under Napoleon would be a process driven by one power, and the creation of the post-Napoleonic 'security culture' at Vienna would be similarly driven by the continent's leading powers.<sup>11</sup> This way of thinking was challenged by the outbreak of revolution in 1848.

To engage in revolution in 1848 was to participate in a shared European present. The historian Dan Edelstein has suggested that 'revolutionaries make demands in the present tense', but it was not only the demands of 1848 that were framed in that language.<sup>12</sup> References to the present abounded in

<sup>10</sup> See Reinhart Koselleck, *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts*, trans. Todd Samuel Presner et al. (Stanford, CA, 2002), 8.

<sup>11</sup> Stuart Woolf, *Napoleon's Integration of Europe* (2002), 8; on the 'security culture', see de Graaf, *Fighting Terror after Napoleon* and de Graaf, *Securing Europe after Napoleon*.

<sup>12</sup> Dan Edelstein, 'Future Perfect: Political and Emotional Economies of Revolutionary Time', in *Power and Time: Temporalities in Conflict and the Making of History*, ed. Dan Edelstein et al. (Chicago, 2020), 357–78, at 357.

discussions of history and politics. The Prussian journalist Fanny Lewald wrote from Cologne in March that ‘mankind is accomplishing its most important deeds in the present’, and the Russian philosopher Alexander Herzen would later lament his own homeland’s fight ‘against the present’.<sup>13</sup> Lesser known than Lewald and Herzen, it was Brătianu whose speech best captured the experience of that European present. He asked his friends whether they heard the echoing voices from Switzerland and the Italian peninsula carrying across the Apennines and the Alps and spoke of movements in Styria, Bohemia and Croatia. In Palermo, he told his audience, the ‘smell of gunpowder rejuvenates the old, arms the young, and makes men of the women’. For Brătianu, these were not the ‘serial revolutions’ that Clare Pettitt has described.<sup>14</sup> They did not exist in sequence. His speech toured Europe, and it did so in the present tense, collapsing the incipient revolutions into a single, shared historical moment.<sup>15</sup> Europe, it seemed, had entered a common present.

One of the strengths of ‘Europe’ as a unifying idea lay in its imprecision. As Mats Andréén has argued, it is only since 1800 that the ‘concept of Europe’ has taken on a primarily political meaning, signifying vague ideas of ‘civilisation’.<sup>16</sup> The inchoate and youthful character of this idea of ‘Europe’ made it readily appealing to political actors in 1848. Every cause and party could appeal to ‘Europe’ because ‘Europe’ had no fixed ideological meaning. It could stand for whatever the speaker desired. In Bucharest, for instance, the Provisional Government called on the landowners who had left the city after the outbreak of revolution to return in order to avoid compromising the revolutionary cause in the ‘eyes of Europe’. One of those landowners would himself invoke the same European eyes when denouncing the government’s plan to transfer land from the nobility to the peasantry: how would Europe respond when it saw that ‘our peaceful and common revolution ... begins its work with the abolition of the right of property and the breakdown of human society’?<sup>17</sup> Such tensions regarding the meaning of Europe both within and between movements would undermine its resonance and hamper the development of a revolutionary coalition.

If the spring of 1848 had promised the synchronisation of Europe through revolution, then by the end of 1849, with the suppression of many of those revolutions, that promise had faltered. Europe’s ideological resonance was stretched beyond its breaking point. The idea of a shared revolutionary present could propagate the cause of revolution, but it could not sustain it or promote its success. A second glance at Werner’s map reveals a continental cacophony. So much was happening that it was difficult to keep abreast of the news from all the different revolutionary theatres. Revolutionary actors could feel that they were contemporaneous with one another, but thinking and acting on

<sup>13</sup> Fanny Lewald, *A Year of Revolutions: Fanny Lewald’s Recollections of 1848*, ed. Hanna Ballin Lewis (Providence, RI, 1997), 30; Alexander Herzen, *From the Other Shore and The Russian People and Socialism*, ed. Isaiah Berlin (Oxford, 1979), 14.

<sup>14</sup> See Clare Pettitt, *Serial Revolutions 1848: Writing, Politics, Form* (Oxford, 2022).

<sup>15</sup> *Anul 1848*, I, 68–9.

<sup>16</sup> Mats Andréén, *Thinking Europe: A History of the European Idea since 1800* (Oxford, 2023), 4.

<sup>17</sup> Morris, ‘Locating the Wallachian Revolution’, 620–1.

the basis of those feelings was difficult. The new technologies of the railway and the telegraph, which Reinhart Koselleck argued linked the revolutionary theatres ‘like a system of communicating tubes’, were not nearly as commonplace as some historians have suggested.<sup>18</sup> It would only be after 1848 that such lines began to link up the continent. Without rapid communication or a practical ‘European’ programme, there was little to sustain the idea of the European present. Particular rather than European problems were more pressing, and as the imagined revolutionary coalition fractured, its counter-revolutionary adversaries demonstrated their organisational and diplomatic skills, reasserting Europe’s old imperial hierarchies against the revolutionary alternative. The statesmen who followed would turn from the present to the future, enshrining progress as a government objective, and here lay the supposed failure of 1848: to keep European politics in the present.

### A European Moment

To mark the beginning of the new year, 1848, the French weekly periodical *L’Illustration* offered some semi-satirical predictions for the months ahead. Before the end of January, a traveller would return to Paris from far-flung lands with incredible stories of the cultures he encountered. February would see a ‘savage’ quit France for his homeland, where his tales of the ‘boeuf gras’ of Shrove Tuesday would scarcely be believed. March would bring dances, April the visit of a foreign ambassador to the racetrack at Longchamps, and May a procession of the national guard to the Tuileries Palace. Doctors would instruct their patients to take the waters in June, and in July, the French capital would witness contests on the Seine to commemorate the eighteenth anniversary of the revolution of 1830, which brought Louis-Philippe to the French throne.<sup>19</sup>

But revolutionary celebrations came early to Paris, and they did not honour the past, but rather signalled the beginning of a new present. France was not the first European state to experience revolution in 1848. The people of Sicily rose in opposition to union with Naples in January, more than a month before the Parisians stormed the Tuileries palace on 24 February, and already the news bulletins seemed to augur wider change. *Le Constitutionnel* praised the ‘great courage’ of the inhabitants of Palermo and the surrounding districts, while the *Bayreuther Zeitung* promised ‘very exciting news’ from the city. *La Réforme* compared the Sicilian struggle to political movements elsewhere, and in Austrian Kronstadt, the *Gazeta de Transilvania* reported that ‘all the Great Powers of Europe’ were looking towards Italy; as, it seemed, were the

<sup>18</sup> Reinhart Koselleck, ‘How European Was the Revolution of 1848/49?’, in *1848: A European Revolution? International Ideas and National Memories of 1848*, ed. Axel Körner (Basingstoke, 2000), 209–21, at 212–13; Dominique Kirchner Reill has made a similar observation on the limits of railways and telegraphy in 1848. See Dominique Kirchner Reill, *Nationalists Who Feared the Nation: Adriatic Multi-Nationalism in Habsburg Dalmatia, Trieste, and Venice* (Stanford, CA, 2012), 279 n. 12.

<sup>19</sup> *L’Illustration*, 1 Jan. 1848; for more on *L’Illustration* during 1848, see Alexandra Tranca, ‘The Illustrated Press and the Writing of History: The Recueils of *L’Illustration* in 1848’, *Dix-Neuf: Journal of the Society of Dix-Neuviémistes*, 21 (2017), 280–96.

newspapers. Across the Wallachian border in Bucharest, the *Curierul Românesc* put the Piedmontese King Carlo Alberto's promise of a new constitution on the front page.<sup>20</sup> Even before the outbreak of the revolution in Paris, there was a sense of the impending drama, and the fall of Louis-Philippe only seemed to confirm that the revolution would become general. Caught in the afterglow and exhaustion of his own experience in the Tuileries palace, one of Brătianu's Wallachian friends would write on 24 February that events in the French capital had 'redeemed the liberty of the world'.<sup>21</sup>

Paris in the spring of 1848 felt like not only a French revolutionary centre, but also a European one. When Fanny Lewald first heard the news of the February revolution during a journey from Oldenburg to Bremen, she wrote of her excitement to be travelling to Paris, the 'eternally beating heart of Europe'. On reaching the French capital, she found the character of its streets matched that European descriptor. On 19 March, she encountered a group of 'Germans' parading along the Rue Royale with the red, black and gold flag of their national movement. They mixed cries of 'Vive la République' with ones of 'Take the revolution to Vienna! The Republic to Vienna! The abdication of Prince Metternich!' It was not only Germans who trumpeted this message either. One newspaper vendor whom Lewald encountered had set the German tricolour alongside similar slogans promising that Vienna would be next.<sup>22</sup>

French authorities encouraged the foreign communities of Paris to understand the revolution as a shared one, and those communities embraced this ideal. Delegations queued alongside journeymen carpenters, schoolteachers, and bureaucrats to offer both thanks and congratulations to the new republican government. Many brought the standards of their own national movements. On receiving one from Brătianu and his friends, the city's deputy mayor, Philippe Buchez, made clear that he understood the revolution as part of wider project. He told his audience that 'that which was done in Paris is not only a French work, but a European one'.<sup>23</sup> The historian Lawrence Jennings has disparaged these ceremonies, suggesting that French officials only intended to satisfy their audiences by 'extolling "the pastoral virtues" of the Hungarians or the "example of liberty" which the Norwegians had given to the world'. If they went further, then it was only because the speeches were 'delivered extemporaneously and with an air of excitement', but it was precisely that 'air of excitement' that defined the revolutionary culture of Paris in the spring.<sup>24</sup> It reflected a general sense of the historical significance of the moment and its European horizons.

<sup>20</sup> *Le Constitutionnel*, 25 Jan. 1848; *Bayreuther Zeitung*, 26 Jan. 1848; *Gazeta de Transilvania*, 2 Feb. 1848; *Curierul Românesc*, 23 Feb./6 Mar. 1848.

<sup>21</sup> Nicolae Bălcescu to Vasile Alecsandri, 24 Feb. 1848. Reproduced in Bălcescu, *Opere*, iv, 86.

<sup>22</sup> Lewald, *A Year of Revolutions*, 24 and 75.

<sup>23</sup> *Le Constitutionnel*, 22 Mar. 1848; an account of the meeting also appeared in the Austrian *Gazeta de Transilvania*, 26 Apr. 1848. It is worth noting that Buchez's vision of Europe excluded the Muslim peoples of the Ottoman empire, whereas the would-be Wallachian revolutionaries in his audience would later emphasise their loyalty to that empire once they took power in Bucharest. See Morris, 'Locating the Wallachian Revolution'.

<sup>24</sup> Lawrence C. Jennings, *France and Europe in 1848: A Study of French Foreign Affairs in Time of Crisis* (Oxford, 1973), 10–14.

Each new revolutionary outbreak increased excitement and conferred further legitimacy on those that came before. News of the Viennese revolution in March proved as momentous as that of Paris. A group of students in the French capital delivered letters congratulating their Viennese counterparts to every newspaper office in the city, while a pharmacist in Florence wrote in his diary that the 'fall of Metternich and his old system of government caused great rejoicing'.<sup>25</sup> The 'old Europe', announced *Le Constitutionnel*, was 'no longer recognisable'.<sup>26</sup> A new one had taken its place. Even outlets that adopted a cautious or hostile approach to the French February revolution now changed tack. The Romanian-language *Organulu Luminarei*, which was published at Blaj in Austrian Transylvania, had described the Parisian uprising as 'tragic' on 3 March. Its editor expressed his fear that the revolution would have terrible consequences for the peace and civilization of Europe, but his opinion changed two weeks later when the stories of Vienna and Hungary arrived. The 17 March edition carried reports of the 'progress towards liberty' instead.<sup>27</sup> Whereas revolution in one theatre could be divisive and destabilising, perhaps indicating the possibility of another European war, the spread of revolution across the continent suggested something different. As one Milanese revolutionary later recalled, every day the news from elsewhere 'roused minds more and more', heightening the 'fever'.<sup>28</sup>

Peoples across Europe discussed and celebrated foreign revolutionary reports. The seventeen-year-old Petre Orbescu, a pupil at the Radu Voda gymnasium in Bucharest, read all the newspaper accounts of events in Paris and Vienna and discussed them with his friends between lessons.<sup>29</sup> In Rome, Pope Pius IX ordered the great bell of the Capitol to be rung when the first stories from Vienna reached the city on 20 March, and its tolls were echoed by other Roman bells. The fourteen-year-old Clara Jane Shaw, travelling in Italy with her family, wrote in her diary that 'joy was painted on every face and before all the cafés numbers of people were collected to congratulate each other'. None had participated themselves in the Viennese revolution, but they seemed to feel a kind of ownership of events. Later in the afternoon, Shaw encountered an immense crowd returning from the Austrian ambassador's residence, where they had torn the coat of arms from the façade. People hissed as it was dragged through the streets, and women cut pieces of wood to stick in their hats.<sup>30</sup> Such hostility towards the insignia of Austrian power might have reflected opposition to the empire's control over Lombardy and the Veneto in northern Italy, but the celebrations of the Viennese revolution itself indicated a less national motive: a sense that what

<sup>25</sup> Diary of J. E. Davies, British Library (BL), Additional Manuscript (Add. MS) 59886, 14; Diary of an English pharmacist in Florence. BL, Add. MS 62907C, 10r.

<sup>26</sup> *Le Constitutionnel*, 20 Mar. 1848.

<sup>27</sup> *Organulu Luminarei*, 3 and 17 Mar. 1848.

<sup>28</sup> Felice Venosta, *Le Cinque Giornate di Milano (Marzo 1848): Memorie Storiche* (Milan, 1864), 44.

<sup>29</sup> Interrogation of Petre Orbescu, Arhivele Naționale ale României (ANIC), Comisia alcătuită pentru cercetarea celor amestecați în fapte revoluționare de la 1848, 601/25/1849.

<sup>30</sup> Diary of Clara Jane Shaw. BL, European Manuscripts (MSS Eur) F197/19, 7v–8r.



had happened in Vienna was momentous and would facilitate similar movements elsewhere.

Revolutionary news became an aspect of quotidian life in Europe in 1848, even beyond the ranks of the revolutionary participants themselves. According to Marie-Claire Hock-Demarle, the French Revolution of 1789 changed the daily lives of educated women across the continent. Before the outbreak of the revolution, their correspondence consisted almost exclusively of personal stories, but after 1789, they began to comment on politics and world events.<sup>31</sup> The revolutions of 1848 had a similar but more widespread effect. The frequency of stories and the scale of their coverage were unprecedented, imprinting European politics on an array of minds. Clara Jane Shaw's diary entries for 1847 consisted exclusively of descriptions of the Italian foods she tried and the sites of art-historical and archaeological interest that she visited, but with the outbreak of a revolution in Naples during her stay, her descriptions of churches steadily gave way to street scenes and reports from abroad. The same was true for the young Laura Anna Harvey in the Bagni di Lucca, who experienced the revolutions primarily through reports in *Galignani's Messenger*. Like Shaw, her 1847 diary entries described Italian art and architecture, whereas in 1848, she began to record the news from France, Italy, Prussia, Bohemia, and even Moldavia, a place that she was unlikely to have ever visited or perhaps even known of before. She was not the only member of her family to become absorbed in European affairs either. The conversations of her household were consumed with revolutionary goings-on.<sup>32</sup>

News knit the local and the European community together and helped to foster a shared sense of the revolutionary present. In his work on the development of nationalism, Benedict Anderson suggested that the act of reading a newspaper brought national communities together. Each reader, he argued, was 'well aware that the ceremony he performs is being replicated simultaneously by thousands (or millions) of others'.<sup>33</sup> His thesis turned on the practice of reading a newspaper, but the contents of that newspaper were just as important in fostering communities, and in 1848, as Harvey's diary entries indicated, people were reading and encountering stories from across the continent. They often did so in public, too. Vendors barked the contents of their dailies to drum up trade, while copies were read aloud in coffee houses and streets. Gondoliers in Venice spoke of 'nothing but politics', and the 'sole occupation' of the Florentines lay in 'discussing the news of the day'.<sup>34</sup> These oral and aural experiences ensured that illiteracy was no bar to participation in the European revolutionary present. In Bucharest, the British consul observed the

<sup>31</sup> Marie-Claire Hock-Demarle, 'Correspondances féminines au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle: De l'écrit ordinaire au réseau', *Clio: Femmes, Genre, Histoire*, 35 (2012), 67–88; Marie-Claire Hock-Demarle, *L'Europe des lettres: Réseaux épistolaires et construction de l'espace européen* (Paris, 2008).

<sup>32</sup> Diary of Laura Anna Harvey, BL, Add. MS 52503.

<sup>33</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. edn (2006), 35.

<sup>34</sup> Paul Ginsborg, *Daniele Manin and the Venetian Revolution of 1848–49* (Cambridge, 1979), 81–2; BL, Add. MS 62907c, 12r.

'eagerness for news among the lower classes', who gathered in the street at the end of the workday to hear the newspaper read aloud.<sup>35</sup>

Journalists and newspaper editors promoted the sense of a continental revolutionary mission, collapsing geographical distances into a shared historical moment. Before 1848, many European periodicals had discussed foreign affairs as a means to evade censorship and make political points at home. One Mannheim calendar, for instance, compared the urban poverty of industrial England with the plights of Rhenish vintners, Austrian farmers, and Silesian weavers. By focusing on foreign causes and discussing abstract political principles, such calendars could serve as 'compact political primers', according to James Brophy, without risking official reprisal.<sup>36</sup> This logic was often reversed in 1848, with other revolutionary movements rendered intelligible through a local or national lens. A newspaper printed at Ain in eastern France compared the fall of Metternich with that of Guizot, while an Irish nationalist newspaper explained the complex national politics of the eastern Habsburg empire through reference to its own particular cause: Croatia, it reported, was the 'Ulster' of Hungary.<sup>37</sup> Such analogies gave readers a sense of the connections between the various causes. If Croatia was the 'Ulster' of Hungary, loyal to the Austrian Habsburgs as the Protestant population of Ireland was to the British crown, then the Hungarian cause was evidently similar to the Irish. Such parallels were not only used to link international to domestic struggles either. A piece in the Wallachian *Popolul Suveran* reported that the 'scenes from Sicily' were 'repeated' in Venice.<sup>38</sup> Their particular revolutionary objectives may have differed, but their means were shared, and through those means they became contemporaneous.

Participation in the European revolutionary present was of particular importance to what might commonly be understood as the more marginal political causes. The French revolutionary officials who promised support to other national movements in Paris in March probably experienced a different kind of excitement from that of their audiences. For them, a common European revolutionary movement aggrandised France, which could serve as a beacon. Listeners interpreted the matter differently. For them, contemporaneity was an opportunity rather than an abstract ideal. It seemed to promise success, and this interpretation carried across Europe. When news of the February revolution in Paris first reached Messina in Sicily, it was accompanied by

<sup>35</sup> Robert Colquhoun to Stratford Canning, 20 July 1848. The National Archives, Kew (TNA), Foreign Office Papers 78/742, 198r.

<sup>36</sup> See James M. Brophy, *Popular Culture and the Public Sphere in the Rhineland 1800–1850* (Cambridge, 2007), 39–41.

<sup>37</sup> *L'Association Démocratique de Bourg*, 26 Mar. 1848. I am grateful to Carine Renoux for sharing her photographs with me. For more on Bourg, see Carine Renoux, 'Living the French Revolution of 1848: Un document inédit dans un fonds d'archives privées de l'Ain', *French History and Civilization*, 9 (2020), 121–34; on Irish newspaper reports of the Hungarian Revolution, see Zsuzsanna Zarka, 'Images and Perceptions of Hungary and Austria-Hungary in Ireland, 1815–1875' (Ph.D. thesis, Maynooth University, 2012).

<sup>38</sup> *Popolul Suveran*, 6/18 Aug. 1848. Other issues featured stories from France, Denmark, Austria, Transylvania, Britain and Ireland.

claims that France would assist 'all nations' that desired to follow suit and 'become republican'. One unsympathetic eyewitness was shocked by the 'bad effect' this rumour had: it prompted many in the town to 'hope' for such assistance and redoubled their convictions.<sup>39</sup>

In the context of a common European present, successful revolutionary change began to seem possible. Messina's inhabitants were not the only people to draw hope from events in other European theatres. The news from major capitals in particular seemed to augur historic change, and many revolutionaries and would-be revolutionaries embraced the opportunity offered. They did not just celebrate the shared historical moment; they tried to shape it. After living through the February upheaval in Paris, the exiled Polish patriot Adam Czartoryski came to believe that the skies were 'clearing' over Europe, and when he heard the news of revolutions in Vienna and Berlin the following month, he wrote to his nephew that Austria and Prussia were 'changing from enemies into allies and are no longer menacing powers'.<sup>40</sup> Given that the two Great Powers were both beneficiaries of the Polish partitions of the eighteenth century, Czartoryski's letter suggested that he understood the cause of revolution as superseding geopolitics: a shared revolutionary culture was more important than particular state interest.

Czartoryski's hoped-for Polish revolution may not have followed, but his belief in the universalist tendencies of revolution was common. Moravia's Chief Rabbi, Samson Raphael Hirsch, was another adherent. In a circular addressed to the 'respectable Israelite communities' of his congregation, he wrote that 'no special fruit will ripen for us, since we shall find our welfare in the welfare of the whole'.<sup>41</sup> He would not advocate Jewish emancipation as a separate cause because he thought it might sow division and attract resentment, jeopardising his community's collective future. Instead, he encouraged Moravian Jews to embrace universal emancipation as a means to overcome intolerance: their struggle was part of a larger, contemporaneous one that would best be won together.

Throughout the spring of 1848, revolution seemed to offer idealistic Europeans an opportunity to realise their political objectives as part of a common cause. The Dalmatian Niccolò Tommaseo had resisted the cause of revolution in the 1840s, instead arguing that the 'only hope [for change] lay in a process lasting centuries', but he changed his mind when the European 'occasion' came in 1848.<sup>42</sup> If revolution could effect change elsewhere, then it could do so in his chosen home of Venice, too. Europe, it seemed, had entered a new historical moment, and it was one in which Tommaseo, Brătianu, and countless others were determined to participate together. It was this sense of contemporaneity that gave those heady months the feeling of a 'Springtime of

<sup>39</sup> Diary of Matthew Drake Babington. BL, Add. MS 38067, 97r.

<sup>40</sup> Czartoryski quoted in Marian Kukiel, *Czartoryski and European Unity, 1770-1861* (Princeton, NJ, 1955), 261-2.

<sup>41</sup> Samson Raphael Hirsch, quoted in Michael Laurence Miller, *Rabbis and Revolution: The Jews of Moravia in the Age of Emancipation* (Stanford, CA, 2011), 190-2.

<sup>42</sup> Quoted in Reill, *Nationalists Who Feared the Nation*, 167.

Peoples', as it became known, but unfortunately for the revolutionaries, their European present scarcely outlived the spring.

### Revolutions Plural

If European and particular interests seemed to complement one another during the spring of 1848, then by the end of the year, many had lost interest in the European framework, instead prioritising their particular objectives. The Swiss socialist and doctor Pierre Coullery was among the first to identify this change. In an 1851 speech to mark the third anniversary of the revolution in Neuchâtel, Coullery told his audience that almost all of the peoples of Europe had celebrated solidarity, overthrown tyrants, broken their chains and shown that 'the will of the people is the will of God' during the spring of 1848, but that unity had not endured: 'after victory, each people said I am free, now the others free themselves, too, and so we will not look to their affairs'.<sup>43</sup> This inattention, allied with growing frictions between different revolutionary movements, would diminish the European horizon of events as spring gave way to summer, autumn, and winter.

Conflicts and setbacks within states captured national audiences and diverted attention from the wider revolutionary cause. Axel Körner has argued that it was through commemoration and memory that a European revolution was transformed into a series of national ones, but that process began during rather than after the revolutions.<sup>44</sup> In France, the Parisian street battles of the June Days between the city's workers and its national guard focused minds on local and national affairs at the expense of European. A Belgian diplomatic agent reported to his superiors that the French government was 'too preoccupied with [its] own troubles' to think of aiding other causes, and it was not only the government that prioritised internal over external affairs.<sup>45</sup> International news began to take up less space in the press, too. The *Courrier de Versailles*, for instance, had reported on the 'immense effect' of the February revolution in March, with refrains of 'all the peoples' and accounts from Austria, Italy and elsewhere common, but the number of such stories dwindled from June onwards.<sup>46</sup> Their absence reflected a growing insularity. Having promised to lead a continent-wide revolutionary movement in the early spring, the French had abrogated that responsibility. They did so at the precise moment when those young men who had heard the deputy mayor of Paris proclaim the February revolution a 'European' work launched a revolution of their own in Bucharest, though it would be another two weeks before news of that unhappy coincidence became clear.

<sup>43</sup> A copy of Coullery's speech was sent to a member of the Orléanist dynasty in exile in Britain. The letter was refused by the royal family and wound up in the dead letter office instead. It can be found at BL, Add. MS 89177/3/5/15.

<sup>44</sup> Axel Körner, 'The European Dimension in the Ideas of 1848 and the Nationalization of its Memories', in *1848: A European Revolution? International Ideas and National Memories of 1848*, ed. Axel Körner (Basingstoke, 2000), 3–28.

<sup>45</sup> Quoted in Jennings, *France and Europe in 1848*, 168.

<sup>46</sup> *Le Courrier de Versailles*, 4 and 29 Mar. 1848.

The Europe of revolution revealed itself to be a Europe of revolutions plural, and their interests and objectives did not necessarily align. When revolutionaries spoke of 'Europe' in the spring, its meaning seemed to them self-evident. They did not need to identify it on a map or with a specific set of goals. It was a revolutionary rallying cry that could and did carry different meanings for different people. Such differences were lost in the excitement of the revolutionary moment of the spring. If all the peoples of Europe rose as one, then it seemed that all could have their freedom, but the simultaneity of the movements began to have a stifling effect. Schleswig-Holstein, for instance, was prized by both the German and the Danish national movements, and no national boundaries could be drawn that were acceptable to all parties. Similar problems prevailed in Transylvania, too. During the spring, several leading figures in the Romanian-speaking community abandoned long-standing fears of forced assimilation to support the Hungarian programme, but the course of revolution in the eastern Habsburg empire drove the two national communities apart, and this divide hampered efforts to forge an international alliance. The Hungarian Prime Minister, Lajos Batthyány, rejected proposals for a Polish-Hungarian-Romanian confederation, and Wallachian attempts to establish a defensive alliance against Russia faltered. The war in Transylvania, according to the man charged with securing an agreement, was too 'barbarous' for national differences to be set aside, while Hungarian partisans regarded his motives with suspicion.<sup>47</sup> Both Transylvanian populations seemed to fear the other more than the Russians. The revolutionary consensus had faltered; some causes now seemed reactionary to others.<sup>48</sup>

Revolutionary movements were no longer in harmony with one another, but rather in competition, and the losers were those already on the periphery. This struggle first became apparent in the summer. Events in Paris, Vienna and Berlin carried significance because these were the capitals of major European powers. They exerted their own gravitational pulls on the continent, and so they were guaranteed to attract the interest of populations beyond their borders. The same was not true for the smaller, more peripheral territories, and the envoys

<sup>47</sup> Nicolae Bălcescu to Ion Ghica, 28 Dec. 1848. Reproduced in Bălcescu, *Opere*, iv, 119; John Paget, 'History of the Revolution in Transylvania', Biblioteca Academiei Române (BAR), *Mss Engleze* 13, 302–5; see also Keith Hitchins, *The Rumanian National Movement in Transylvania, 1780–1849* (Cambridge, MA, 1969), 185–9; on Kossuth, see Apostol Stan, 'Lajos Kossuth and the Romanians during the 1848 Revolution', *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire*, 33 (1994), 355–74; István Déak, 'Lajos Kossuth's Nationalism and Internationalism', *Austrian History Yearbook*, 12 (1976), 48–52; Gelu Neamț, 'Maghiari alături de revoluția română de la 1848–1849 din Transilvania', *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie George Bariț din Cluj-Napoca*, 41 (2002), 97–126; István Déak, 'István Széchenyi, Miklós Wesselényi, Lajos Kossuth and the Problem of Romanian Nationalism', *Austrian History Yearbook*, 12 (1976), 69–78; on dialogue between the two national groups after the revolutions, see Ambrus Miskolczy, 'The Dialogue among Hungarian and Romanian Exiles in 1850–1851', in *Geopolitics in the Danube Region: Hungarian Reconciliation Efforts, 1848–1998*, ed. Ignác Romsics and Béla K. Király (Budapest, 1999), 99–129.

<sup>48</sup> See also the Slovenian attitudes to the 'separatist' Italian and Hungarian revolutionaries, as described in Holly Case, 'Slovene Self-Perception through the Slovene- and German-Language Press: 1848', in *Historični seminar 3: Zbornik predavanj 1998–2000*, ed. Metoda Kokole et al. (Ljubljana, 2000), 37–60.

of the governments that seized power in these theatres had to struggle for popular and governmental attention. One frustrated Wallachian diplomat in Vienna begged a compatriot in Bucharest to establish an office of men charged with corresponding with newspaper editors in Vienna, Frankfurt, Berlin and elsewhere to 'describe every event, no matter how small, and without the slightest delay'. Without such information, the 'newspapers will publish nothing', and if they published nothing, then the Wallachian cause would slip from the political agenda, hampering his efforts to secure financial and material support and leaving the principality exposed to counter-revolutionary threat from Russia.<sup>49</sup> The recipient of this appeal was the same man who later wrote of the European 'occasion' of the Wallachian revolution. His colleague, evidently, saw that 'occasion' as vital to the cause. Its opportunity could not be lost.

But competition for resources proved fierce and availability scarce. France's revolutionary history and the French Provisional Government's vague promises of the spring meant that many looked to Paris for support. One revolutionary agent in the French capital reported that he found himself competing with representatives of Ireland, Denmark and the various Italian states in his search for funds and arms. Both were difficult to acquire. French finances were in a parlous state following the agrarian crisis of 1845–7, and what money the state could raise was needed for domestic programmes rather than to support a European revolutionary project.<sup>50</sup> Weapons were similarly scarce, and those that could be found difficult to transport. The Austrian cabinet, for instance, offered no guarantees of safe passage for goods crossing territory under Hungarian revolutionary control, and the Hungarians were themselves unlikely to facilitate shipments of rifles given they needed weapons, too.<sup>51</sup> This situation worsened as counter-revolutionary governments seized power. In 1849, radicals in the German Rhineland found that France refused to export rifles, while those they bought in Belgium were confiscated by Prussian authorities along the Rhine.<sup>52</sup>

If the spring of 1848 had suggested that all of Europe could exist in the same revolutionary present, then by the end of the summer it seemed that the continent had fallen out of sync and the old imperial and national hierarchies had reasserted themselves. Czartoryski's belief that common revolution overcame particular interest now looked misguided, and the governments of the Great Powers were pursuing policies to mitigate the risk of another European war. Events in the Italian peninsula were of particular concern. Whereas the French foreign minister of the spring, Alphonse de Lamartine, had contemplated military engagement, the government of Louis-Eugène Cavaignac was

<sup>49</sup> Alexandru G. Golescu to Nicolae Bălcescu, 25 July/6 Aug. 1848. Reproduced in *Anul 1848*, II, 732–6.

<sup>50</sup> Vasile Malinescu to A. G. Golescu, 8/20 Aug. 1848. Reproduced in *Anul 1848*, III, 287. On the French economic crises of the period, see Ernest Labrousse (ed.), *Aspects de la crise et de la dépression de l'économie française au milieu du XIXe siècle, 1846–1851* (La Roche-sur-Yon, 1956).

<sup>51</sup> A. G. Golescu to the leaders of the Wallachian revolutionary government, Aug. 1848. Biblioteca Națională a României (BNR), Fond Brătianu VI/13, 4–5. Also reproduced in *Anul 1848*, III, 150.

<sup>52</sup> Jonathan Sperber, *Rhineland Radicals: The Democratic Movement and the Revolution of 1848–1849* (Princeton, NJ, 1991), 423.

determined to avoid it. His foreign policy, according to the Hungarian Lajos Mandl, was 'completely absorbed by the Italian question', and that focus would affect French policy elsewhere.<sup>53</sup> The French ambassador to the Ottoman Porte, for instance, could offer little support to Wallachia's revolutionary envoy in Constantinople. His priority was to avoid disagreement with Great Britain in order to maintain the Franco-British alliance in Italian affairs.<sup>54</sup> Revolutionary simultaneity had ceased to be a blessing and become an obstacle to overcome, and that obstacle was greatest and most insuperable on the European margins.

Appeals to 'Europe' faltered as revolutionary unity faltered, and events in one theatre ceased to serve as inspiration in others. Instead, they often became cautionary tales. The Venetian leader Daniele Manin was horrified by the violent struggles of the June Days in Paris, which convinced him of the need to prioritise 'internal order'.<sup>55</sup> His perspective was shared by Laura Anna Harvey in the *Bagni di Lucca*, who wrote of the 'dreadful atrocities' of the Parisian insurgents, reserving particularly harsh judgement for the deeds of women, one of whom had allegedly 'cut into pieces the bodies of 2 of the garde mobile who had been killed!'<sup>56</sup> Whether true or not, such stories reflected a growing fear of disorder and violence, which fed antipathy to the wider revolutionary cause and contributed to emerging divisions. In Vienna, revolutionary activists no longer saw the Hungarian cause as compatible with their own, and when the Habsburg empire's peasantry was emancipated in September, it would not be accompanied by Rabbi Hirsch's hoped emancipation of the Jews. As Michael Laurence Miller has put it, their cause had been 'severed from the struggle for universal human rights'.<sup>57</sup> The sense of possibility that had stirred hearts and shaped the action of the spring had faded. The European revolutionary present seemed to have passed; continental unity was no more.

### Counterrevolutionary Order

As a revolutionary vision of Europe faltered, a counter-revolutionary alternative rose. Pierre Coullery blamed the 'lack of unity' within the European revolutionary party for reviving the 'hopes of the reaction', but it was not only the inability or unwillingness of revolutionary figures to translate European dreams into a practical programme for the continent that saw the counter-revolutionaries triumph from the summer of 1848 onwards.<sup>58</sup> While the revolutionaries became insular, preoccupied by domestic concerns, their adversaries maintained a continental outlook. Theirs was a conservative,

<sup>53</sup> Lajos Mandl to A. G. Golescu, 8/20 Aug. 1848. Reproduced in *Anul 1848*, vi, 26; Jennings, *France and Europe in 1848*, 194–5.

<sup>54</sup> Ion Ghica to the Wallachian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Aug. 1848. Reproduced in *Anul 1848*, iii, 501–4.

<sup>55</sup> Ginsborg, *Daniele Manin*, 267.

<sup>56</sup> BL, Add. MS 52503, 99r.

<sup>57</sup> Miller, *Rabbis and Revolution*, 260; on Vienna, see R. John Rath, *The Viennese Revolution of 1848* (Austin, TX, 1957), 151–3.

<sup>58</sup> BL, Add. MS 89177/3/5/15.

imperial vision shaped and influenced by the European 'security culture' that predominated in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars and the Congress of Vienna of 1815.<sup>59</sup> These counter-revolutionary men did not endeavour to restore or recreate the congress framework, but they adopted its continental outlook. Unlike the revolutionaries, who dreamt of Europe, the counter-revolutionaries thought and acted in European terms, defeating the disparate causes one by one.

The revolutionary vision of European politics was rivalled by an imperial perspective that was predicated on a strict hierarchy of nations and states. Jonathan Sperber has suggested that the 'lack of revolutionary activity' in Russia and the British metropole was as significant if not more so than 'events in the smaller states' in 1848, but it was precisely for those smaller states that the absence of British and Russian revolutions was of greatest consequence.<sup>60</sup> Imperial Britain would suppress a revolutionary uprising in Cephalonia, while Russia would flex its reputation as the 'gendarme of Europe' in favour of the old geopolitical order and the supremacy of the Great Powers.<sup>61</sup> In March, Tsar Nicholas I issued a manifesto describing Russian policy on the revolutionary spring: his armies would not interfere in any revolution that did not pose a direct threat to the stability of his empire. France lay beyond his sphere of influence. The Polish borderlands did not. But it would be a revolution in a territory that was under his 'protection' that led Russia to engage in its fight 'against the present', as Alexander Herzen put it. Following the revolutionary outbreak in Wallachia in June, Nicholas issued a second manifesto, in which he extended his concern for internal stability to the neighbouring Ottoman empire. Neither Wallachia nor Moldavia, which had already been occupied by Russian troops, was a 'recognised' state. Both were 'pure and simple provinces forming part of an empire', and they had no right to change government as they pleased. Their political status was determined by treaties between his own empire and the Ottoman, and so it was for those two powers to decide how they should be governed.<sup>62</sup>

Nicholas's July manifesto warned of the consequences of unchecked revolution, and his vision of imperial dismemberment rather echoed some of the

<sup>59</sup> See de Graaf, *Fighting Terror after Napoleon*.

<sup>60</sup> Jonathan Sperber, *The European Revolutions, 1848-1851* (Cambridge, 2005), second edition, 260-4. For alternative perspectives on Britain and the revolutions of 1848, see Taylor, 'The 1848 Revolutions and the British Empire'; Margot Finn, *After Chartism: Class and Nation in English Radical Politics* (Cambridge, 1993), 60-105; David Large, 'London in the Year of Revolutions, 1848', in *London in the Age of Reform*, ed. John Stevenson (Oxford, 1977), 177-212; Gregory Claeys, 'Mazzini, Kossuth, and British Radicalism, 1848-1854', *Journal of British Studies*, 28 (1989), 225-61; John Belchem, 'The Waterloo of Peace and Order: The United Kingdom and the Revolutions of 1848', in *Europe in 1848: Revolution and Reform*, ed. Dieter Dowe et al., trans. David Higgins (Oxford, 2000), 242-58.

<sup>61</sup> On British interventions in Cephalonia and the other Ionian islands, see Bruce Knox, 'British Policy and the Ionian Islands, 1847-1864: Nationalism and Imperial Administration', *The English Historical Review*, 99 (1984), 503-29; David Hannell, 'A Case of Bad Publicity: Britain and the Ionian Islands, 1848-51', *European History Quarterly*, 17 (1987), 131-43; Maria Paschalidi, 'Constructing Ionian Identities: The Ionian Islands in British Official Discourses; 1815-1864' (Ph.D. thesis, University College London, 2009).

<sup>62</sup> *Journal de Saint-Petersbourg*, 19/31 July 1848.



hopes of revolutionary figures during the spring. He charged the Wallachians with plotting the establishment of a new and independent Daco-Romanian Kingdom and suggested that success would inspire the Bulgarians, Roumelians and other peoples of the Ottoman empire to follow suit, leading to the collapse of a polity that Nicholas described as ‘more than ever an essential condition for the maintenance of the general peace’.<sup>63</sup> Whether Nicholas feared the collapse of a rival or not, such an outcome must have seemed possible or even probable given the revolutionary diffusion of the spring. One Wallachian poet compared its spread to cholera in his memoirs, and it was precisely that pandemic quality that gave Nicholas’s claim merit: Bucharest might be an entry point into the Balkans.<sup>64</sup>

The logic of Nicholas’s warning about the spread of revolution was an inversion of the argument made by many nineteenth-century national political activists. According to historian Holly Case, writers often argued that the resolution of one national ‘question’ would in turn solve others, too. In the 1830s, for instance, Adam Czartoryski argued that answering the ‘Polish question’ was a precondition for the settlement of the wider European one. By granting Poland its independence, Europe would become more stable.<sup>65</sup> Nicholas flipped this argument in relation to Wallachia: a revolutionary ‘answer’ to its question would not resolve anything and would instead raise further problems. The best way to address national ‘questions’, in his view, was to avoid raising them in the first place. Through these means, Europe’s imperial order could survive unchallenged.

Great Power cooperation would overcome the loose union of peoples. French desire to avoid conflict with the British empire had already undermined Wallachian interests in Constantinople, and soon Russian imperial pressure would push the Ottoman government to intervene militarily in the principality. This intervention was meant to forestall a Russian occupation, but Russian forces soon followed, opening a channel for the broader imperial counter-revolutionary project. Wallachia may have been considered of marginal revolutionary significance, but its importance to the spread of counter-revolution was evident to the decision-makers in Europe’s eastern imperial capitals. Following the Ottoman and Russian military intervention, Austrian troops would cross through the principality as a means to outflank their Hungarian revolutionary adversaries, and in the summer of 1849, Russian troops provisioned in Moldavia and Wallachia would enter Hungarian-controlled Transylvania, too.<sup>66</sup> Revolutionary simultaneity was overcome consecutively.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> C. D. Aricescu, *Memoriile Mele* (Bucharest, 2002), 89.

<sup>65</sup> See Holly Case, *The Age of Questions Or, A First Attempt at an Aggregate History of the Eastern, Social, Woman, American, Jewish, Polish, Bullion, Tuberculosis, and Many Other Questions over the Nineteenth Century, and Beyond* (Princeton, NJ, 2018).

<sup>66</sup> On the Russian interventions, see Barbara Jelavich, ‘The Russian Intervention in Wallachia and Transylvania, September 1848 to March 1849’, *Rumanian Studies: An International Annual of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 4 (1979), 16–74; Ian W. Roberts, *Nicholas I and the Russian Intervention in Hungary* (1991).

After revolution had inspired revolution in the spring of 1848, it was counter-revolution that fed counter-revolution by the summer of 1849. Clara Jane Shaw's family left Italy for Switzerland in May 1848, and she found herself in Heidelberg in the Duchy of Baden by June 1849. Rather than descriptions of jubilant revolutionary scenes, her diary was now filled with stories about the movements of soldiers and the dangers that those movements entailed. She and her family lived in a 'state of suspense', with Prussian and Austrian forces scarcely two hours from the city: 'we have just perceived clouds of dust on the road to Ladenburg and can distinguish arms glistening in the sun'. The triumph of counter-revolution in Austria and Prussia was spreading to Baden, and the news that Shaw had heard from Rome suggested a similar fate there. She learned from a family friend that some 26,000 people were said to be hiding in Saint Peter's Basilica, awaiting the entry of another counter-revolutionary army, this one dominated by the French forces of Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte, whose triumph in the December 1848 presidential election had confirmed the defeat of a certain French revolutionary ideal.<sup>67</sup> In July 1849, as his soldiers toppled the short-lived Roman Republic, it was clear that France was now exporting counter-revolution.<sup>68</sup> The revolutionary present was in the past.

A Europe of orders was reasserting itself against a Europe of revolutions. When the Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm IV refused the Frankfurt Parliament's offer of a German crown on 3 April 1849, he did so because he did not consider it in the parliament's power to give. His was not an ultimate refusal of Prussian leadership in a German state, but perhaps a recognition that an age of nations and nation-states was one for the future, not yet the present, and that it could not and would not begin with revolution from below.<sup>69</sup> Many moderate revolutionary figures sympathised with this view, too. The Czech František Palacký, for instance, argued that the continued existence of the Habsburg empire served the interests of the Czechs better than any Czech nation-state could and was also integral to the stability of Europe as a whole.<sup>70</sup> It was this moderate strain of thought that conditioned the political culture of Europe after 1848, supporting the continued dominance of the

<sup>67</sup> BL, MSS Eur F197/20, 49–51.

<sup>68</sup> On the Roman Republic, see Harry Hearder, 'The Making of the Roman Republic, 1848–1849', *History*, 60 (1975), 169–84; on the French invasion, see David I. Kertzer, *The Pope Who Would Be King: The Exile of Pius IX and the Emergence of Modern Europe* (Oxford, 2018), 190–206; on the subsequent French occupation of Rome, see Alessandro Capone, 'La protection française des États pontificaux, occupation militaire et souveraineté partagée dans l'Italie du Risorgimento (1849–1870)' (Ph.D. thesis, Sciences Po – Institut d'études politiques de Paris, 2019).

<sup>69</sup> On the revolution in Prussia, see Christopher Clark, *Iron Kingdom: The Rise and Downfall of Prussia 1600–1947* (2006), 468–509; on the workings of the Frankfurt Parliament and its attempts to create a German national state, see Brian E. Vick, *Defining Germany: The 1848 Frankfurt Parliamentarians and National Identity* (Cambridge, MA, 2002).

<sup>70</sup> See Axel Körner, 'National Movements against Nation States: Bohemia and Lombardy between the Habsburg Monarchy, the German Confederation, and Piedmont-Sardinia', in *The 1848 Revolutions and European Political Thought*, ed. Douglas Moggach and Gareth Stedman-Jones (Cambridge, 2018), 345–82.



**Figure 2.** Ferdinand Schröder, 'A Survey of Europe in August 1849'.

imperial Great Powers and reasserting the old civilisational hierarchies. The people of Europe could not 'exist in the same now'.<sup>71</sup>

As the cacophony of revolution died away, a quieter Europe took its place. The difference between these two visions of the continent is perhaps best illustrated by the differences between Werner's 'Political Map of Europe' of 1848 and Ferdinand Schröder's *Düsseldorfer Montashefte* caricature 'A Survey of Europe in August 1849' (Figure 2). Whereas Werner's continent is overrun with people, Schröder's Europe is dominated by a few large monarchical and presidential figures, who sweep away and banish the smaller revolutionary ones. Schröder's Europe is more geographically limited, too. He confined himself to drawing Britain, France, Prussia and Austria. The Italian peninsula and the lands to the east of Pest are cut from the frame. Europe's imperial core was once again the focus; the rest of Europe was lost to insignificance and consigned to peripherality.

### Rooted in the Future

Some four years after the people of Berlin took to the streets to demand a programme of reforms in March 1848, the Prussian conservative Friedrich Julius

<sup>71</sup> Ernst Bloch, trans. Mark Ritter, 'Nonsynchronism and the Obligation to its Dialectics', *New German Critique*, 11 (1977), 22–38, at 22.

Stahl gave a talk at the city's university titled 'What is the Revolution?' Revolution, he told his audience, was 'not a single act', but rather a 'continuous condition, a new order of things'. It was, he said, the 'characteristic world-political signature of our age'. Stahl's 'semantic inflation' of revolution, according to Christopher Clark, 'made it easier to conflate the events of 1848 with the workings of history'.<sup>72</sup> It was also an approach that robbed the revolution of its status as an 'event' and transformed it into a process. Such an understanding made sense in the context of what Clark has called elsewhere the 'European revolution in government' of the 1850s, but it marked a departure from the European political culture of the spring of 1848, in which the significance of the present moment was seldom far from minds.<sup>73</sup> As Victor Hugo put it at the Paris Peace Conference of 1849: 'the era of revolutions is closing'.<sup>74</sup>

With the passing of the revolutionary present, a certain idea of Europe faltered, too. It seemed self-evident to many of the actors of 1848 that their movement constituted a 'European' revolution that was meant to reshape European society, but the precise parameters of the 'Europe' of which they spoke were unclear. The only certainty seemed to be that it existed in the present moment, with those whose homelands failed to participate in the European moment fearing being 'left behind' by the 'brotherhood of nations'.<sup>75</sup> The choice to speak of 'brotherhood' between nations, which had its origins in the old French Revolutionary ideal of 'fraternity', emphasised the sense of European peoples being contemporaneous with one another: it placed them on the same generational level. Such an idea was of particular significance to revolutionary activists from the so-called 'smaller' states, who celebrated their participation in a pan-European moment.

Some hint of the European dimension of events endured. In the same speech in which he declared the 'era of revolutions' to be over, Victor Hugo prophesied the creation of a future 'United States of Europe'. He was not the lone believer in such a union, either. Another former revolutionary by the name of Ion Ghica described a 'United States of Europe modelled on the United States of America' as the only means for the continent to 'escape shipwreck'.<sup>76</sup> His invocation of the American system probably reflected his own background in one of the smaller European revolutionary theatres. Under the US Constitution, all states were considered equal. None was more important than any other. They existed on the same plane. But neither

<sup>72</sup> Friedrich Julius Stahl, 'What is the Revolution?' [1852] in *From Vormärz to Prussian Dominance, 1815-1866*, ed. Jonathan Sperber [[https://ghdi.ghi-dc.org/pdf/eng/4\\_P\\_O\\_Stahl\\_What%20is%20the%20Revolution.pdf](https://ghdi.ghi-dc.org/pdf/eng/4_P_O_Stahl_What%20is%20the%20Revolution.pdf) accessed 26 Apr. 2023]; Christopher Clark, *Time and Power: Visions of History in German Politics, from the Thirty Years' War to the Third Reich* (Princeton, NJ, 2019), 138-9.

<sup>73</sup> Christopher Clark, 'After 1848: The European Revolution in Government', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 22 (2012), 171-197.

<sup>74</sup> Victor Hugo, *Discours d'ouverture prononcé au Congrès de la Paix le 21 août 1849* (Paris, 1849), 5.  
<sup>75</sup> Reill, *Nationalists Who Feared the Nation*, 156.

<sup>76</sup> On Hugo's speech, see Maurice Agulhon, 'Victor Hugo et l'Europe: Les États-Unis d'Europe', in *Penser les frontières de l'Europe du XIX<sup>e</sup> au XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle*, ed. Gilles Pécout (Paris, 2004), 39-51; Ion Ghica to Constantin A. Rosetti, 12/24 Mar. 1850. Reproduced in Ion Ghica, *Opere*, ed. Ion Roman (6 vols., Bucharest, 1967-88), vi, 149-55.

Hugo nor Ghica considered a United States of Europe to be a realistic short-term possibility. Its realisation could only come in the future. Europe no longer seemed a matter for the political present.

Technological progress rather than a radical revolutionary contemporaneity would bring parts of the continent together after 1848. It was telling, perhaps, that Hugo's vision of the new, post-revolutionary Europe was one rooted in the future, in which 'amelioration' replaced 'revolution': 'thanks to the railways, Europe will soon be no bigger than France was in the Middle Ages'.<sup>77</sup> The unfurling of telegraph lines would have a similar effect to the railways, but such development would be uneven. Progress would not move at a common European velocity.<sup>78</sup> In one way, the historian G. M. Trevelyan was right to suggest that history had reached a 'turning point' and 'failed to turn' in 1848.<sup>79</sup> The old imperial hierarchies still dominated politics. When Christopher Clark identified the developments of the 1850s as a 'European revolution in government', he diverged from the particular national and imperial frameworks that had predominated, but this older interpretative framework itself reflected the breakdown of the European present of the spring of 1848. Like the revolutionaries who had seized power during that brief historical moment, the technocrats of the 1850s looked abroad, too. But unlike the revolutionaries, they did so to study and learn from other approaches rather than to share in a broader political project. Their own polity's future was the priority, not a common European present.

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<sup>77</sup> Hugo, *Discours*, 3.

<sup>78</sup> On the expansion of the railways and telegraphy and their impact on experiences of distance and time, see Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the Nineteenth Century* (Oakland, CA, 1977); Albert Schram, *Railways and the Formation of the Italian State in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1997); Roland Wenzlhuemer, *Connecting the Nineteenth-Century World: The Telegraph and Globalization* (Cambridge, 2013); Jean-Michel Johnston, *Networks of Modernity: Germany in the Age of the Telegraph, 1830-1880* (Oxford, 2021).

<sup>79</sup> G. M. Trevelyan, 'From Waterloo to Marne', *Quarterly Review*, 229 (1918), 73-90, at 79.

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