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El Caballero Gustavo Bergenroth

How a Prussian researcher wrote History in Spain

(Original German Title: El Caballero Gustavo Bergenroth Wie ein preußischer Forscher in Spanien Geschichte schrieb)

Expected publication: 15 May 2020

SAMPLE TRANSLATION

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pp. 6-15; 58-66

Prologue: One Mr Bergenroth

Six Wives

Every child in England knows the simplified story of Henry VIII and his six wives: Divorced, beheaded, died, divorced, beheaded, survived… Of all the historical scandals, this one takes the top spot. Any other fiction pales in comparison. Head over heels in love, a young and charming King breaks from the Catholic church to be able to get divorced and marry the beloved woman he will later execute; the bombshell at the beginning of a drama of worldwide historical significance, whose actresses remain stuck as female stereotypes in the countless retellings of the tale: "The Saint, the Schemer, the Doormat, the chubby Airhead, the sexy Teenager and the Bluestocking.

The Saint is Henry's first wife, Catharine of Aragon. She still appears in noble purity as the innocent sacrificial lamb in the TV programmes and documentaries devoted to the *Six Wives* by the BBC. David Starkey, writer of the most recent of these in 2001, started work soon after on a book of this documentary, which he imagined as a short, lively retelling of these well-

known stories. He soon saw that he would have to start from square one. Namely, he discovered important documents about Catherine's life that painted her in a less flattering light, not however in inaccessible archives, but in a publication from the English government, issued by German historian Gustav Bergenroth in 1868.

How could it be? This had been in print now for almost 150 years, "surely enough time for historians and biographers to reach a balanced judgement?". It had not been used, as Starkey noted: "I'm afraid the case is still wide open, for historians, chained to their 'unanimous praise of Catherine's virtues', have shown an extraordinary determination to ignore the clear evidence [the sources]:"

Catherine of Aragon is not the only historical figure that Bergenroth viewed differently than the historiography that came before and after him and Starkey was not the only historian, that re-discovered Bergenroth's discoveries. What he found out about Catherine's royal sister for example, who went down in history as *Juana la Loca*, Johanna the lunatic, caused a considerable stir at the time, but was then largely forgotten over the course of a century. I come across remarks such as "Bergenroth was the first to…" increasingly often.

This also goes for his legendary contribution to the field of cryptology. When, at the start of February 2018, Spanish newspapers announced that the secret service CNI had been successful in deciphering two encrypted letters from one of the highest Officers of King Ferdinand of Aragon, dating back to the start of the 16th Century, they were met with immediate opposition on the internet. The journalist Julio Martín Alarcón tweeted: "No, the CNI has not decoded the codex of Gran Capitán. That was a German in the 19th century. That was the work of Gustav Bergenroth, a german Hispanist, living in England, who published his work on the Archive of Simancas.

It is indeed strange. Anyone who has seriously devoted themselves to the Tudor period and has therefore consulted the sources collected and published by Bergenroth knows his name. Almost no one, however, knows who he was.

I first encountered him on a classical level, in Rome, where he had come across the secretary of the Prussian ambassador, Kurd von Schlözer, in January 1867, who summarised what he had learnt about Bergenroth in a biographical study.

"His life is a novel. In 1848, at which point he was already an assessor of the state court, he joined the revolution and stood on the barricade at the corner of Taubenstraße. In the next year, when the 'rescued' Manteuffel administered his staunch reaction against Prussia, Bergenroth wrote to the Minister of Justice that for the time being, his political views no longer allow him to remain in the civil service; he would have to wait until a new Minister was in

charge of the justice. He then went to Frankfurt am Main for a while, and soon after to America on behalf of a company that wanted to buy estates in California. Arriving in San Francisco, he lost all his stocks and shares and upon enquiry after the trading house to which he had been addressed, he learnt that it no longer existed. As a result, he was *vis a vis de rien* and lived for four weeks on raw rabbit that he culled from the woods without even bread or salt. Nevertheless, his intelligence soon gave him such a reputation in the area, that around 70 colonists from all over the world joined him and revered him as their chief. He promptly established an independent principality, in which he lived as an autocrat, his residence becoming a lonely village. However, since this lay in a marginal district, he soon quarrelled with the Americans, who brought in two canons, supported by cavalry, against King Bergenroth. Meanwhile, money arrived for him from Europe. At the time, the correspondence from San Francisco to Germany and the delivery back to California took quite a while, but the money came nevertheless, and he now abandoned his reign to move to England. As King, he warranted three death sentences, but is proud to have never carried them out. In England, he encountered the historical community, that collects documents relevant to the island kingdom. Thus, the former Royal Prussian Chamber Court Assessor from Masuria in East Prussia became first a king, and then an English historian. Having spent over ten years collecting in Simancas, he is now preparing himself to write a history of Charles V. He is so well versed in the 16th and 17th centuries, that it is as if he himself has lived with all the fantastic personalities of the time."

A fabulous story with some errors and exaggerations, probably down to the forgetfulness and the vivid imaginations of both narrators. And yet, the most exciting chapter of Bergenroth's life story is reduced to a mere half sentence in Schölzer's version: "After having spent over ten years collecting in Simancas, he prepared himself to write a history of Charles V".

The Fort

Summer 1860. Early, on the morning of the 20th August, Gustav Bergenroth arrives in Simancas after a long and tiring journey. Even from a distance he can see the mighty grey castle in the treeless plateau of Castile; his main workplace for the next eight and a half years: The *Archivo General*, the National Archives of Spain, which was and is made up of different collections, the archives of Simancas. A month later, he confessed to the readers of the London

Athenæum, the most distinguished literary and historical magazine in his adopted country, England, that at first sight he had become somewhat apprehensive.

"Simancas was built on a hill that descends steeply towards the banks of the Pisuerga. The narrow, ancient stone bridge with its seventeen arches is not without *grandeza* and the castle and village church, that perch in reckless solitude on the summit, present themselves rather impressively against the deep but bright blue sky high above Castile. The village doesn't give off a melancholy impression, although not a single tree grows there. The village! But where is this village? Where are the houses? All I can see beside the castle and the church are irregular mounds, made from the same light clay as the hill, and scatterings of darker flecks. Are these little mounds houses and the flecks windows and doors? The whole scene resembles a big rabbit burrow. Not a very promising sight!"

Meanwhile the carriage has slowly moved upwards. Bergenroth gets out at the red drawbridge of the Fort, opposite the *Parador della Luna*, the only pub in Simancas, which he's been strongly warned against due to its dirtiness, its loudness, and above all its music-loving landlady. Aside from the wagon drivers, nobody can put up with her guitar playing for more than a night. So, he ventures further with his heavy bag (lots of books) towards the town square, the *plaza*, which is surrounded by twelve houses, all of which have a balcony on the first and second floor.

"Next to the *ayuntamiento* or the Simanca Town Hall is the *Estanco Nacional*, a modest shop, where Don Pedro sells dreadful tobacco and even more dreadful cigarettes to the town government. Socially, he fits in somewhere between a farmer and a day labourer. I don't like his facial expression much; it suggests a certain brutality. But he was recommended to me, and I don't know another soul for a hundred miles. So, after five minutes I became his housemate and since I pay a little more for his 'hospitality' than I would for first class hotel on the Rhine or in Switzerland, he will defend me from all the landlords in Simanca with the ferocity of a wild animal.

I have a living room. It isn't very big, only nineteen-foot-long and eleven foot [approx. 5.8 x 3.4 metres] wide. The door consists of a simple wooden frame covered in a white canvas. After much use it's now in pretty bad condition. Yesterday I patched up the biggest hole with a needle and thread I had brought from London. The stitches were admittedly rather large, but ultimately Pedro and his wife Mamerta had to admit that I'd improved the room. But how short lasting these improvements are when they go against the spirit of the countryside! The housecat, that had over the years become accustomed to entering and leaving my room through said holes, was so disturbed by my innovation, that she sprang through the half-rotten canvas with one

frantic movement, leaving the hole now bigger than ever. Never mind! A portrait of San Ignacio von Loyola hangs above the door, with the inscription, 'Forbid the evil spirit from stepping through this door', so everything's safe from this side. Opposite the door is the window, or rather, another door that opens out onto the balcony, which, instead of canvas is furnished with heavy, wooden shutters. What do you think Pedro has promised me if I stay in Simancas over winter? An oven? A fireplace? No – just some panes of glass with which I can shut the window without totally blocking out the light. The winter here is so cold that the river is often covered in ice.

Behind my room is a dark corridor with even darker holes on both sides that serve as bedrooms. They have no doors. A linen sheet hangs at the opening; that's it. The first hole, or alcove as they call it, contains my bed. The corridor serves as a communal dressing room. That's it. The furnishing compliments the house perfectly, being of a simple nature and by no means abundant. The beds are the only exception. They are fine, and the linens are as delicate and white as in any grand house in England. My pillow and bedspread are even trimmed with a thick border of local lace."

Privacy here is out of the question. The landlady comes into Bergenroth's room whenever she pleases to barter from the balcony with the men and women below her in the square, who drive their "patient and highly intelligent donkeys from door to door, town to town", laden with small watermelons, chickpeas and other "Staples of Spanish life". His patience is really put to the test on laundry day when Athanasia, "a bold girl of about 20 years" hangs his bedding, and that of the whole family, from the balcony to dry, in order to iron it on his desk later.

At this point, the narrator breaks from the description of these new living conditions he's having to get used to in order to direct the reader to the real reason for his trip, the *Archivo General.* An imposing, grey ruin, with battlements and arrow slits, towers, deep graves and drawbridges, it is, in a sense, the mother of all archives, the first European building of the early modern period specifically and adequately built for the purpose of collecting and storing state documents. The choice of a secluded fortress mirrors the convictions of the founders of the archive: knowledge can be a tremendously deadly weapon.

"Situated on the border between Castile and León, it was in the past a place of great military significance, put under the command of the hereditary admirals of Castile until Isabella I of Castile seized the castle and it's rich lands for the crown and Charles V and Philip II swapped its rifles and halberds for papers and parchments. Although the purpose of this place

had changed completely, the hereditary archivists or librarians from the Ayala family identified so strongly with their predecessors, the admirals, that they considered it their life's mission to defend the literary treasures entrusted to them from all literary assailants. Robertson belongs to those, whose entrance was denied, when he was writing his history of Charles V. Needless to say, the Ayalas only obeyed orders from Madrid and at this time there was no European government worthy for its historians to be granted access to the sources of their field of study. However, even the strongest fortresses cannot withstand an ongoing siege forever, meaning the downfall of Simancas was inevitable when the 'Zeitgeist' seriously attacked Simancas. They surrendered in 1844. Monsieur Gachard, sent from the Belgian government and Monsieur Tiran, sent from the French Ministry accessed the archives and spent over a year rummaging through its dusty contents. Don Hilarion Ayala, the archivist – a very honest and kind-hearted man for that matter – did not outlive the fall of the old system for long. He died in the following year."

Back then, in the heroic age of historiography, "dusty contents" sounded far more exciting than today, seeing as the archive currently serves as a habitat for peculiar, introverted geeks. For centuries, all archives had effectively been fortresses. Those in power didn't want to show their hand, and those who betrayed their secrets, did so at great risk. The Enlightenment and the French Revolution brought the change. The archives gradually opened up, later in Spain than elsewhere (although still far earlier than in the Vatican), when a liberal government came to power in Madrid. While nation states established themselves in Europe, a gold-rush presided not only amongst the historians, but also amongst the governments that sent them into the archives. It was a matter of national interest and personal glory, of the prerogative of interpretation and the search for the truth. Where was the good stuff? Who would be the first there, have the richest haul, find the most interesting bits? And who will be confident enough in their own success, to form their findings into a historical narrative. After Bergenroth had registered himself as a user of the archive, he acquainted himself – and later on the readers of the *Athenæum* - not only with its rich volumes, stored in 47 rooms (the 48th was set aside for the users and the personnel), but also with the researchers, that had been there before him. How long had they stayed? What had they found? Where had they come from? The list wasn't long: A Belgian, a Frenchman, a German, no more than three Spaniards (which seems inconceivable in Spain) and an Englishman, who had only examined a couple of documents anyway. Others had managed to get permission to use the archives but then hadn't used it. Bergenroth intended to go about his own work more thoroughly.

Memorials and Praise

Mort á Madrid. In February 1869, the Parisian newspaper *Le Gaulois* announced the death of the *célèbre historien Allemand Bergenroths* [sic!]. William Cornwallis Cartwright, a friend and admirer of the deceased who devoted a *Memorial Sketch* to "Gustave Bergenroth" a year later, judged his 'celebrity' more reasonably. Among the hundred or so that would read Bergenroth's name on the front page, not a single soul would've heard of him; "to the majority of the public he was unknown". What Bergenroth had brought to light in the eight and a half years since his arrival in Simancas, largely from the study of its own collections but also of other European archives in harsh conditions, through strenuous work and against much opposition from archivists and clerks, was not likely to knock the socks off the average reader: two volumes with registers (summaries) of sources regarding the English-Spanish relationship in the early modern period, as well as a supplement band with amendments. His introductions, that told old stories in a new and exciting way, caused a stir primarily amongst professionals in the field. The remaining printed legacy was not huge: some essays and reviews of different subject groups, that were published here and there in German and English magazines, and thus became forgotten. The biggest stand-alone work, a monograph of Charles V, that he had begun shortly before his death after years of research, remains unwritten. Cartwright claims it would have without a doubt made him famous. But things being what they were…

Bergenroth was and is such a striking example of the disproportion between the glory and the significance of a person, that his biographer (and Pegasus with him) went into raptures about it. He begins his *Memorial Sketch*, "He was not only a remarkable man, but also a strange man, who combined a wealth of the most diverse, curious and seemingly irreconcilable skills and characteristics".

Cartwright, who was born in 1825 as the eldest son to an English Diplomat and a Bavarian Earl's Daughter, was brought up bilingual and in two cultures. He could therefore correspond with Bergenroth's German friends and relatives to request biographical information. The family in Thorn, where Bergenroth's brother Julius, a secondary-school teacher, lived with an eighty-two-year-old mother and the sister Louise, helped with letters, but most useful for Cartwright was Bergenroth's résumé, sent to him by a former friend, Paul Friedmann (former because Friedmann and Bergenroth had fallen out some months before the latter's death). Friedmann formed, so to speak, the skeleton of the biography, which Cartwright then fleshed out with Bergenroth's letters and writing and breathed life into with his own adoring affection. The result is such a vivid and lively portrait the reader feels by no means short-changed, although large gaps become evident on closer inspection.

"It's no more than a sketch, because all the materials for a comprehensive and complete biography are inaccessible", remarked the critic of the London Times. "But the sketch is nevertheless of the most remarkable, interesting character and those who have never even heard of Bergenroth, will surely enjoy following the course of the life of a man of undeniable genius, and an extraordinary nature." Normally one differentiates between men of intellect and men of action. Bergenroth, however, became

an extraordinary exception to this rule, being just as able to take on a Grizzly as an incomprehensible manuscript in a Spanish fort. “He was like a modern Cerberus, three different men in one, formed from as incompatible characters as Hawkeye from the Leatherstocking Tales, Camille Demoulins of the Jacobin writers from 1789, and an academic such as Professor Porson or Sir Francis Palgrave.”

The roughly thirty-page obituary to Bergenroth, also published in 1870 in the *Altpreußischen Monatsschrift* paints a similar picture. Behind its anonymous author hides his bother Julius.

To my knowledge, there have only been two major publications on Bergenroth’s life. Neither his homeland nor his adoptive country felt responsible for the German living in England, a common fate of emigrants. The authors of later reference guides and lexicon-articles drew from this, however certainly without adopting their esteem. The fact that he was self-educated, in other words he had not learnt his craft at university, certainly played a not insignificant role, as did his left-wing liberal attitude and his unusual résumé, about which rumours were circulating.

The historian Reinhold Pauli used his segment in the *Allgemeinen Deutschen Biographie* to settle scores with the “superbly gifted, though strongly and ambiguously inspired man”, who did indeed accomplish greatness, but who had also had the boldness to criticise an authority like the celebrated Ranke with ‘exorbitant arrogance’ and to portray historical figures and events in unusual gloom with animation and sensationalism, rather like how political castes are presented to us today in the TV show, *House of Cards*.

A judgement that is often unfoundedly taken by those born after Bergenroth is that “As a man of unbalanced Character he took pleasure in lecturing the leading historians Ranke, Mignet and Gachard; in the introduction of his well deserving Source work, he delighted in the far-fetched narration of ethical debauchery”, as reprehended by church historian, Victor Conzemius. Johannes Hönig, the biographer of the Roman historian Ferdinand Gregorovius, speaks dismissively of the ‘adventurous historian Bergenroth”. Even the entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* in 2004 (!) attests Bergenroth(‘s) immense diligence and ascertains that he made history with his research, but simultaneous lacked “perspective”!

It is evident that Bergenroth was no Saint, but the ignorant, overly didactic manner, in which he is reprimanded to this day, is troublesome and provokes conflict. A good 150 years after his death and Cartwright’s Memorial Sketch, I think it’s about time to shift this “modern Cerberus” of “undeniable Genius” into a light he deserves. I am telling the story of a German cosmopolitan with an extraordinary and therefore exemplarily résumé, because such biographies were almost the norm in the 19th Century. The political persecutions of the Metternich Era and the revolutions of 1848-49 didn’t only drive engaged Democrats into exile and shape their biographies in German countries. We hear about misery and despair, hard struggles for survival, new beginnings and fairy-tale careers, for example Carl Schurz, who made it all the way to Home Secretary after his escape to America. However, Bergenroth’s path from Prussian Court Assessor from Masuria to English historiographer is a whole lot more astonishing.

[…]

Barricade of Hearts

"Suddenly the political storm breaks out in Paris, and Bergenroth listens intently; the weather comes nearer, reaching a breaking point in Vienna, and the old regime also sinks in Berlin. Something he'd often dreamed of now appears before him as a finished fact. He plunges into the current of the excitement." So says his brother Julius.

"In 1848 a revolutionary storm swept through Europe. With incredible speed, the masses from the workers' movement and the liberals from the middle classes overthrew the old regimes in Paris, Milan, Venice, Naples, Palermo, Vienna, Prague, Budapest, Krakow and Berlin and began to form new, liberal orders. Such dramatic political events had not been seen in Europe since the French Revolution of 1789 - and wouldn't be seen again until the 1989 Revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe. The strong current brought about heavy losses to the conservative regime, that had brought peace to the continent since the Napoleonic War of 1815, but had also crushed dreams of national freedom and constitutional leadership.", claimed the English historian Mike Rapport in a book published in 2008 about the revolutionary year of 1848. He wrote the book not only to tell an often recounted, extremely complex History in a new and entertaining way, but also because said History lingers to this day. One can also frame the "lingering" more aggressively, as did the journalist Benedikt Erenz. Under the title, "No idea, never heard of it", he lamented the collective ignorance of Germans regarding the history of their Democracy in 2016. This had by no means been a present, brought by American missionaries to 'dark Germany' in 1945, as the founding legend of the Federal Republic suggests. He notes that without this "basis of parliamentary experience earned from 1848, our constitution and our republic from 1949 would've had no chance, despite the 'economic miracle'". And he asks: who knows the "fascinating biographies and destinies, that connect themselves with our history (…), why are they only forgotten in Germany?" Gustav Bergenroth belongs to the forgotten.

The revolution in Paris began on the 21st February with unrest that led to street battles. On the 24th February, the King abdicated and fled into English Exile. On the 27th February, the second French Republic was declared…

Various circumstances delayed the transmission of news to Berlin. However, this delay only made the abundance of sensationalist news that reached the Berliners on Sunday 28th

February all the more powerful. Thereby, a new epoch of municipal history began for the chronicler: “the tremendous impression of the day, in the course of which the news of the two minister changes, a change of throne, the topple of the throne and the news of a new Revolution in France arrived, revolutionised the mood.” News reports arrived every day that further fuelled this feeling. There were town meetings and petitions sent off to the King, all demanding the same things: freedom of the press, freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, the reform of the justice system, free elections, but above all, the fulfilment of the promised constitution of their fathers. The anxious King, torn between hardliners and moderate advisors, ordered additional forces into Berlin. Bloody altercations ensued between the military and the population. On the 16th March the downfall of the Metternichs was announced from Vienna. All that was needed now was the proverbial spark to also ignite the fuse in Berlin.

The time had come on the 18th March, a Saturday, like in so many cases, through a chain of coincidences and misunderstandings. Throughout the course of the morning, a large crowd had gathered in front of the Berlin City Palace. Delegations from Cologne and Berlin delivered petitions and the King promised to grant the due freedoms. The mood was “joyful” and by no means aggressive.

Around midday it occurred to the reactionary party to exploit the temporary absence of the current commander in chief, General Ernst v. Pfuel, who was anxious to reach reconciliation, by putting one of their own, General V. Prittwitz, in charge. When the King gave the order to “clean” the palace square, his Dragoons rode into the crowd baring sabres. The infantry was set into motion. Shortly after, two shots were fired close by.

It is still unclear, how this came to be. It doesn’t seem to have come from an order from above. “The screams of anger and bitterness could be heard through all the streets. ‘Assassination’ was cried out, although nobody had been injured by the first two shots. The general consensus of the citizens was that, despite all concessions, the military would let loose on them as they had done in previous days. The evil intent seemed to be confirmed. If the King had shown himself on horseback and had spoken words of reassurance and enlightenment, then maybe the calm could’ve been restored, and the flowing of blood ceased. The King however stayed in his Palace and let the events run their course.”

The streets of Berlin became a battlefield. The Barricade combat lasted from 5pm until the next morning. The was no winner, only victims, most of them civilians and among them, women and children. There are only estimates of how many. Veit Valentin, the writer of a meticulously researched and vividly narrated History of the Revolution, guesses roughly 230 while the historian Rüdiger Hachmann estimates 277. At any rate, the March casualties in the

days and weeks after the struggle made up the majority of the revolution. The King gave into their demands, ordered the removal of the troops from Berlin and permitted the creation of a milita, to which Bergenroth's friend, the baron of Reden, also belonged as chief guard. On the afternoon of the 19th March, the street fighters brought the corpses of the fallen, decorated with flowers, branches and bay leaves to the palace courtyard, some on stretchers, some in open carriages.

"One stretcher after the other was placed down, and their bearers loudly proclaimed who each one was: '15 years old, my only son' – 'trampled without mercy after he had surrendered' – 'a father of five uneducated children' - The commotion grew, and shrill screams suddenly rang out:

'The King ought to come'. The demands were echoed with increasing conviction. Finally, Friedrich Wilhelm appeared, with the Queen on his arm. The King was suffering heavily, barely holding himself together; the queen was deathly pale, on the verge of collapse. The corpses were held out towards him; one with his stiffly clenched fist stretched eerily in rigor mortis in the air. The women wailed; the men launched threats. On the call of 'Hat's off!', Friedrich Wilhelm took off his military cap. He made to speak, but was drowned out by the noise. As a man and a Christian, he believed, having bowed before the grandeur of death, that everything was reconciled and reunited. The fighters had now forced the King to show respect towards the victims of his own troops. It was an unprecedented personal and political affront. This Prussian King was now defeated as no other had been.

On the morning of the 21st March, the people were informed by a placard that the Prussian king had placed himself at "the head of the whole fatherland to save Germany. You will behold him in your midst with the old, dignified colours of the German nation on horseback." Sure enough, the king rode at the head of a procession through the streets, stopping in front of the university and to give a speech for the students gathered there in which he reinforced the message from the placard. He swore to God that he wanted Germany's freedom and Germany's unity and order. "the excitement was huge." In one enacted proclamation "to my people and the German nation" made on the evening of the same day, he satisfied all the demands of the Revolution, those being "a true constitutional government, a veritably traditional, liberal administration, legal security, the introduction of jury trial, equality of religion…"

Valentin judged that "the processes of the 21st March [were] the climax of the Berlin Revolution".

The funeral reception for the March casualties, that takes place on the 22nd March, becomes an impressive demonstration for the Revolution. Hundreds of thousands of Berliners gather at Gendarmenmarkt for the funeral procession, which, following speeches from the clergy of the different confessions, proceeded to the newly built graveyard in Friedrichshain. Once there, Georg Jung begins to speak, though this isn't included in the programme. Attempts to silence him are unsuccessful. In his speech, he calls on the mourners to take heed of the peace and calls for reconciliation from the preachers, and also to take on, as the holy legacy of the dead, the aims that they had given their lives for. "Let there be no more bloody revenge, but rather a spirit of admonition, risen from the blood, so that nothing more may be withered, robbed or tricked for the freedom for which we died", he called and concluded with an adjuration:

"Begone forever into oblivion the dividing walls of men, take down the barricades of your heart after you have taken down those of the battle. There is no more mob, no more rough rabble, no more vermin, because we, as said the dead, have sealed your letter of freedom with our own blood."

Much of the significance was given then to the "completed work of the funeral", that the revolution was now completed. What happened to it afterwards, in Berlin as in other German lands, was its implementation, even when it did not seem as such. Countless activists got involved with the organisation of elections, merged into clubs and associations, founded newspapers, wrote pamphlets, demonstrated, discussed and argued with one another until exhaustion. A National Assembly was formed in Berlin, and the first German Parliament at St. Paul's in Frankfurt. The opposition had split into supporters of a constitutional monarchy and Democrats, grounded in inter-party disagreements. The common fear of the bugbears, Communism and Socialism, was exploited in propaganda by the Right in a 'Red Sock Campaign' and the subservient Prussian-German spirit, that had been practiced for centuries, was asserted more and more. All were reasons for the failure of a movement, whose initial success, according to pedestrian observers, had been in any case down to the weaknesses of those in power.

"I believe to this moment, that the government could have crushed the rebellion, with which I sympathise, if no cowards had been at the helm. But the fact is that the king had to take his hat off to the people's corpses and parade through the city ahead of the Berlin spears Soon everything that was demanded, even a constitution, was promised, but it goes without saying that all such promises were only made with a *reservation mentalis* [a mental reservation]. The ministry Auerswald-Camphausen made as if to do the same, a constitutive meeting was called and everything was up in the air until, yes, until the hangover came. The government gradually

regained its feet and when the constitutive Prussian meeting as much as orchestrated a tax refusal, it was transferred to Brandenburg as a punishment. When it continued to squirm there, it was dissolved, a new constitution was imposed and a new Assembly (of which I was a member), was called, which was also dissolved after brief amusement."

So said Hugo Wesendonck half a century later, who had taken part in a socialist-communist information session with Bergenroth as a young lawyer at the start of 1844.

Elections

Following his return to Berlin, Bergenroth had set himself other targets, but "the year 1848 had plunged him yet again back into politics". According to Friedmann's account, Bergenroth was "outside the castle on the famous morning [of the 18th March] and had "narrowly avoided a sabre blow" "close to the Opera Square" during an "attack of the guard hussars" because the hussar's horse had fallen onto the pavement. In the evening he visited the various barricades. Kurd von Schlözer believed to know better: he "stood on the barricades on the corner of Taubenstrße." Georg Jung on the other hand explained upon request of Bergenroth's Biographer Cartwright, that Bergenroth "had not participated in the struggle of the night of the 18th of March" and added "neither did he appear at the clubs or associations later. But he did do the democratic party a great service through various brochures and pamphlets, mostly containing national economic or statistical content. This used to be his favourite study."

Whether Bergenroth had participated in the barricade struggles or not, he was very likely to have appeared at the "clubs and associations", something that Jung in particular ought to have known. He had eventually become the long-running chairman of the 'political clubs' he had co-founded with Bergenroth, at the meetings of which Bergenroth piped up more often, as his brother testifies. He also regularly spoke in people's assemblies and made himself so well-known, that a Pomeranian constituency elected him to the first chamber of the Prussian House of Representatives, as we hear from Friedmann. We also know that from the three volume Berliner Revolutions-Chronik, put together by Adolf Wolff, an invaluable source work, which meticulously logs the political activities in the month following the March revolutions.

Unlike the omnipresent Jung, Bergenroth seldom appears here. An ally outlined him as a big, handsome man "of various mindsets, who never pushed in. His eloquence was insignificant; his effectiveness for democratic elections in the Provinces was greater."

Free elections lay very close to Bergenroth's heart, a legacy of his father, who had never forgiven Friedrich Wilhelm III's breaking of the promise of the constitution. At a people's assembly in Tivoli, a restaurant in front of the Hallesches Tor, Bergenroth led the debate and was elected into the 'Berlin people's vote committee'. On the 11th April this committee enacted a Manifesto, that was printed onto placards and hung up. Its main concern was the protest against the "election of a Prussian deputy to the German Parliament by the united Lantags". The legality of the fact that the deputies should be determined by direct elections, while the government only wanted to permit indirect elections through electors was contested and challenged. This was a procedurethat, according to the committee, contradicted the "principle of Democracy", favoured the aristocracy and warped the will of the people. But that was exactly what it was designed to do..

When a deputation of the election committee, to which Bergenroth also belonged, called on the Chief Minister of Camphausen to urgently plead with him once again (though in vain) for direct elections, Camphausen answered "that direct suffrage like that of North America is not feasible without a census, that the replacements from these direct electons will lead to a republic and that the survival of the current government is only the slightest bit linked to the already enacted election legislation." A member of the deputation reminded the Minister that a constitution on the broadest terms was accepted by the people on the 18th March. Mr Camphausen responded: "Broadest terms? You should've actually let the women and children vote too!" To which the deputy replied: "Excellency, deign to make a caricature of what I have spoken from the very bottom of my heart."

The member of the election committee who had informed the audience of the course of events in the *Reform* could have been Bergenroth. For some months he was the editor of what became the single newspaper (after bans on other publications) of the left opposition, that had been founded by the famous journalist Arnold Ruge in Leipzig and was at first published in both Berlin and Leipzig, but later just in Berlin. Despite its significance, the newspaper has not been academically analysed until today. The fact that Bergenroth substantially contributed to it has stayed largely unknown, because his work for the *Reform* had been kept a secret. Arnold Ruge and Heinrich Bernhard Oppenheim were named as the editors responsible in the first months. As a Jew, the latter had particularly good reason to affiliate with the democratic party.

He came from a Frankfurt bankers dynasty and had already done his doctorate by the age of nineteen following his law studies in Göttingen, but didn't get any further at university, as he was unable to habilitate. It was the same in Berlin, where he soon joined the social circle of Bettina von Arnheims. When Bettina championed Oppenheim's case to her brother-in-law, Karl von Savigny, "he rebuffed such outrageous impertinence with the words: 'a Jew cannot and is not allowed to become a teacher at a Prussian university.'"

Oppenheim lectured for a term as a outsider lecturer on state and citizens' rights in Heidelberg. In 1847, he moved to Berlin to try his hand at politics.

The small man with the rosy-cheeked baby face and the dark eyes usually repelled people at the first encounter, "particularly through his unpleasantly loud voice and strong Frankfurt accent", however after closer acquaintance, they would rave about their agreeable and interesting dealings with this vivid and high-spirited man, Oppenheim had conversational skills that were a rarity in Germany. With him one was sure, that the entertainment would never falter, as it consistently overflowed with jokes and colourful ideas and anecdotes." He and Bergenroth became friends during their shared work on the *Reform*. When Cartwright was searching for information for his biographical sketch of Bergenroth, Oppenheim was also named as a source. His work as an editor quickly convinced Bergenroth, that he was not made for the editing of a daily newspaper. "Lacking resources and contributions, it caused him great annoyance not to mention the various harassments he had had to endure from the police." On the 14th November 1848, the *Reform* set its publication date on a day that coincided with the end of the revolutionary movement in Prussia.