DID THE 1848 REVOLUTIONS IN GERMANY ACHIEVE ANYTHING?

Study the Background Information and the sources carefully, and then answer all the questions.

Background Information

In 1847–48 there were uprisings in a number of German states including Prussia, Austria and Bavaria. Across Germany princes promised to grant constitutions. In March 1848 politicians from all over Germany met at Frankfurt and arranged elections to a National Assembly. By March 1849 this assembly, known as the Frankfurt Parliament, had drawn up a constitution for Germany. In April it offered the position of constitutional monarch of Germany to Frederick William IV of Prussia. He disdainfully rejected it on the grounds that the Parliament had no right to offer it to him. By this time both the Austrian and Prussian monarchies had recovered and crushed the revolutions. In the summer of 1849 what was left of the Frankfurt Parliament was dispersed by troops.

Some historians believe the revolutions achieved nothing. In fact, some argue that the progress of German liberalism was set back by decades. Others argue that the established order had been given a sharp shock and that the ideas supported by the revolutionaries lived on. Some argue that the way forward had been established – a united Germany under Prussian, rather than Austrian, leadership.

SOURCE A

The outstanding achievement of the German people in the nineteenth century was the creation of the nation-state, and 1848 was a milestone on the road. It is the story of a courageous experiment with high ideals. In March 1848 the pent-up dissatisfaction of Berlin broke into open revolt. The March Days buried the doctrine of the Divine Right of Kings and encouraged reformers all over Germany to act. Frederick William IV capitulated at the first challenge. The supreme achievement of the Year of Revolution was the Frankfurt Parliament. Its members agreed to summon a National Assembly elected by universal suffrage. A new spirit was revealed when Germany witnessed a major political initiative by private citizens without seeking permission from their Hohenzollern masters.

However, the triumph of reaction in Austria and Prussia sealed the fate of the Frankfurt Parliament. It was now little more than a debating society, for at any moment it might be dissolved. Neither Prussia nor Austria felt the slightest obligation to preserve its life. Frederick William’s refusal of the offer of the Imperial crown was the final end of the Frankfurt Parliament. Its members melted away, with only the radicals remaining. The revolution never had a chance because the real power was on the other side.

German liberalism received a blow from the failure of the German revolution from which it never recovered. However, the desire for a nation-state survived in the hearts and minds of millions.

From a history book published in 1948.
SOURCE B

1848 was the decisive year of German history. It anticipated Germany's future. The failure of the revolution discredited liberal ideas. After it, nothing remained but the idea of Force, and this stood at the helm of German history from then on. The refusals of Frankfurt to go with the masses, the failure to offer a programme of social reform, was a decisive moment in the failure of the German liberals. If they had allied with the masses they might have succeeded. There was another, and even more important, cause of failure. The Frankfurt Parliament had come into being when the armed power of Austria and Prussia collapsed. Its prestige declined as Austrian and Prussian armed power revived. Germany had to hitch itself to one of them and so the Frankfurt Parliament excluded Austria from Germany and offered the Imperial Crown to Frederick William IV of Prussia. Thus even at the moment of its failure, the Frankfurt Parliament predicted the future of Germany: Prussia would dominate Germany. With Frederick William's refusal of the Crown, the Frankfurt Assembly was over. The moderate men went home. Only the radical minority was left. When they tried to put into effect a revolutionary programme they were chased by the Prussian army out of existence. The German revolution had been defeated, and liberal Germany was never to be renewed.

From a history book published in 1946.

SOURCE C

A cartoon published in Germany, March 1848. King Frederick William IV is saying to the revolutionaries, ‘You up ahead! Hurry to me because I want to lead the movement.’
SOURCE D

We cannot conceal the fact that the whole German question is a simple alternative between Prussia and Austria. In these states German life has its positive and negative extremes: in the former, all the interests are national and reformative, in the latter, all are dynastic and destructive. The German question is not a constitutional question, but a question of power; and the Prussian monarchy is now wholly German, while that of Austria cannot be. We need a powerful ruling house. Austria’s power meant lack of power for us, whereas Prussia desires German unity in order to supply the deficiencies of her own power. Already Prussia is Germany in its early stages. It will merge with Germany.

*From a speech in the Frankfurt Parliament by Johann Gustav Droysen, a leading member of the Parliamant. He was one of the first to withdraw from the Parliment after Frederick William rejected the German crown.*

SOURCE E

About the crown which the Parliament has for sale. Every German nobleman is a hundred times too good to accept such a crown moulded out of the dirt and dregs of revolution, disloyalty and treason. If accepted, it demands from me enormous sacrifices and burdens me with heavy duties. The German National Assembly has counted on me in all things, which were calculated to establish the unity, power and glory of Germany. I feel honoured by their confidence but I should not justify that confidence if I, violating sacred rights, were without the voluntary agreement of the crowned princes and free states of our Fatherland, to make a decision which must be of decisive importance to them and to the states which they rule.

*Frederick William’s response in April 1849 to the offer of the German crown, made to him by a deputation from the Frankfurt Parliament.*

SOURCE F

The royal government views with great satisfaction the confirmation from Austria that, like us, it considers the German federation as continuing to exist and wishes to come to some understanding with the National Assembly. This understanding must not stand in the way of German efforts to present to the world a united political body nor of a merging of commercial interests. Prussia is not striving to extend its power and has no desire to share in the running of the federal authority except in so far as is appropriate to the importance of its power. Prussia supports the independence of the individual states and is of the opinion that the creation of a new German imperial house is not necessary for achieving a real unification of Germany.

*A statement from the Prussian government to Prussian diplomats in the other German states, January 1849.*
A German cartoon, 1848. It shows Germany in 1848.
A drawing, from the time, of the Württemberg army and the last members of the Frankfurt Parliament in Stuttgart in June 1849.
Now answer **all** the following questions. You may use any of the sources to help you answer the questions, in addition to those sources which you are told to use. In answering the questions you should use your knowledge of the topic to help you interpret and evaluate the sources.

1. Study Sources A and B.
   How far do these two sources agree? Explain your answer using details of the sources. [7]

2. Study Source C.
   What is the cartoonist's message? Explain your answer using details of the source and your knowledge. [7]

3. Study Sources D and E.
   Does Source D make Source E surprising? Explain your answer using details of the sources and your knowledge. [8]

4. Study Source F.
   Why did the Prussian government issue this statement in January 1849? Explain your answer using details of the source and your knowledge. [8]

5. Study Sources G and H.
   How similar are these two sources as evidence about events in Germany in 1848–49? Explain your answer using details of the sources and your knowledge. [8]

6. Study **all** the sources.
   How far do these sources provide convincing evidence that the 1848 revolutions in Germany achieved nothing? Use the sources to explain your answer. [12]
Option B: 20th Century topic

WERE PEOPLE AWARE OF WHAT HITLER WAS TRYING TO ACHIEVE IN SPAIN?

Study the Background Information and the sources carefully, and then answer all the questions.

Background Information

In 1936 the Spanish Civil War began between the Republican government and the Nationalists consisting of fascists, monarchists and conservatives. The USA announced it would remain neutral. At first France sent arms to the Republicans, but under pressure from Britain called for European countries not to intervene. A Non-Intervention Committee was set up and 27 countries signed the Non-Intervention Agreement in August 1936 including Germany, Britain, France, Italy and the Soviet Union.

Despite this, Italy, Germany and the Soviet Union did intervene – as early as July 1936 Hitler was sending planes. He was keen for Spain to become fascist as this would help encircle France and strengthen the German position in Europe. To hide Germany’s involvement, he sent troops, planes, tanks and munitions through Portugal. He also claimed that any Germans fighting in Spain were volunteers and nothing to do with the German government.

Were people aware of the possible dangerous consequences of Germany's involvement in Spain?

SOURCE A

Our foreign policy has been inspired by two simple principles: the determination to place France’s interests above all others, and the conviction that France has no greater aim than that of peace. I shall not accuse anyone of trying to push us directly or indirectly toward war. Everyone in France wants peace. Everyone understands that war cannot be contained within national borders, and that a people can only protect itself from it by helping to protect all others from it.

As far as we are concerned, there is only one legal government in Spain, or, to put it better, only one government. I recognise that France’s direct interest includes and calls for the presence of a friendly government on Spanish soil, and one that is free of certain other European influences. I have no hesitation in agreeing that the establishment in Spain of a military dictatorship too closely bound by links of support to Germany and Italy would represent not only an attack on the cause of international democracy, but a source of anxiety for French security and a threat to peace. I deplore that such an obvious truth was not understood from the start by all of French and international public opinion. I do not deny the personal friendship tying me to the Spanish Socialists and Republicans despite the bitter disappointment they feel about me.

All of us were hoping that the Non-Intervention Pact would be signed more promptly; that we were counting on the other governments keeping their commitments. The policy of non-interference has not produced all we expected of it. But is that a reason to condemn it?

If we must prevent the rebellion on Spanish soil from succeeding, it is not enough to denounce the Non-Intervention Agreement or to re-establish the arms trade between France and Spain. This would not be adequate. To assure the success of Republican legality in Spain we would have to take a much greater step.

From a speech in the French House of Representatives by Léon Blum, Prime Minister of France, December 1936.
SOURCE B

Our policy has been consistently directed to one aim – to maintain the peace of Europe by confining the war to Spain. Although it is true that intervention has been going on and is going on, in spite of the Non-Intervention Agreement, it is also true that we have succeeded in achieving the aim of our policy, and we shall continue that aim and policy as long as we feel there is reasonable hope of avoiding a spread of the conflict.

I do not believe that it is fantastic to think that we can continue this policy successfully, even to the end. The situation is serious, but it is not hopeless. Although it may be true that various countries or various governments desire to see one side or the other side in Spain winning, there is not a country or a government that wants to see a European war. Let us keep cool heads. Neither say nor do anything to cause a disaster which everybody really wishes to avoid.

When I think of the experience of German officers and the loss of life on the Deutschland, and the natural feelings of indignation and resentment that must have been aroused by such incidents, I must say that I think the German government, in wisely withdrawing their ships and then declaring the incident closed, has shown a degree of restraint which we ought to be able to recognise.

I make an earnest appeal to those who hold responsible positions both in this country and abroad to weigh their words very carefully before they utter them on this matter, bearing in mind the consequences that may flow from some thoughtless phrase. By exercising caution and patience we may yet be able to save the peace of Europe.

From a speech in the House of Commons by British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, February 1938. The Deutschland was a German battleship that was attacked off the Spanish coast in 1936 by Republican planes. Germany claimed it had been on a non-intervention patrol.

SOURCE C

If the Spanish government succeeds in suppressing the rebellion it will not only keep one more country in the camp of peace but will influence the whole situation in Europe by inspiring new confidence in the strength of democracy and in the possibility of the peaceful settlement of international questions. In this event the danger of war would be lessened.

Violations of the Non-Intervention Agreement by certain governments have made it an empty, torn scrap of paper. If success goes to the rebel generals, supported in contravention of the Non-Intervention Agreement by fascist powers, then the whole outlook in Europe will be blackened. It would be such an encouragement to all the forces of aggression, hatred and destruction in Europe that war would engulf our part of the world in the very near future.

The Soviet Ambassador to Britain speaking at a meeting of the Non-Intervention Committee, October 1936.
SOURCE D

A British cartoon published in January 1937. On the left are Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, Blum and Eden (a leading member of the British government) playing cards. ‘Trustful Tony’ (Eden) is saying, ‘Just to discourage cheating, I’ll wear a strait-jacket and let you chaps play my cards.’ In the top left is the rock of Gibraltar.

SOURCE E

It is clear that the German government does not want any more trouble in connection with the Spanish Civil War. It seems to believe that further support of the rebels will injure Franco-German and, above all, Anglo-German relations. Much as Germany desires a rebel victory and concerned as it is over what it believes to be the spread of so-called ‘Bolshevism’ in Europe, it prefers, for the moment at least, not to take any risks where no vital interests of its own are involved.

Interference with the internal affairs of other countries is a conscious instrument of German foreign policy, and is for that very reason used only when it is safe to do so, or, if any risks are taken, only when the end in view is regarded as being of vital interest to Germany. It is therefore unlikely that Germany will put any further obstacles in the way of an agreement for non-intervention.

It is therefore possible that the international crisis produced by the Spanish Civil War is coming to an end.

From an English newspaper, August 1936.
SOURCE F

One has to repeat it and repeat it again. It is a lie that the fight is going on between Communism and Fascism. The Spanish government is not attacking private property or the Church. The government is doing just the same as President Roosevelt strives to do: free the country from the power of economic Royalists. The Spanish government has an international right to defend itself against a clique of rebels who called German Nazis and Italian Fascists to fight the war against Spanish people for them. To say it frankly, the democracies have let Spain down.

I have talked to prisoners – Nazi and Italian pilots who have killed dozens of children, dozens of women. They all pretended to have come voluntarily to Franco’s aid, even officers of the regular German army – presumably as deserters! One prisoner, a lieutenant in the German army, said to me, ‘We in the German army consider the war in Spain to be a preparation for a preventative war against France.’ May this be a warning to all concerned!

I ask you in America, witnesses of a war which is fought not only for Spain, but for all democracy: Have we the right to be deaf and blind? Have we not the responsibility to help them?

An American journalist broadcasting from Madrid to the USA, October 1938.

SOURCE G

An American cartoon published in 1938.
An Australian cartoon published in June 1938. The man represents Britain.
Now answer all the following questions. You may use any of the sources to help you answer the questions, in addition to those sources which you are told to use. In answering the questions you should use your knowledge of the topic to help you interpret and evaluate the sources.

1 Study Sources A and B.

How far did Blum and Chamberlain agree? Explain your answer using details of the sources. [7]

2 Study Source C.

Are you surprised by this source? Explain your answer using details of the source and your knowledge. [7]

3 Study Source D.

Why was this cartoon published at this time? Explain your answer using details of the source and your knowledge. [8]

4 Study Sources E and F.

Does Source E prove Source F to be wrong? Explain your answer using details of the sources and your knowledge. [8]

5 Study Sources G and H.

How similar are the messages of these two cartoons? Explain your answer using details of the sources and your knowledge. [8]

6 Study all the sources.

How far do these sources provide convincing evidence that people understood the danger posed by Hitler’s intervention in Spain? Use the sources to explain your answer. [12]