

This letter was evidently written after the failure of the 1848/9 uprisings. In a logical sense, some passages do not hang together very well, as usual due to unreadable or questionable words in crucial places.

13. December 1849

Dear Friend!

At last I have enough time to write to you. I have to make up for my earlier inaction with strenuous studying, and catch up on things which I missed as undergraduate. However, I am a lot happier than I was at the time of my enforced inactivity. At least I have the opportunity for diversion from the anguish and torment of my idle hours. You are unfortunately right when you say (*unable to get a good read on this two-liner, but I think it says:*) "The end is a deep grave of Freedom and Strength."

That we had to live to see this! Once upon a time I looked forward to the morning which would suddenly dispel the gloomy night with its rosy shine and proclaim a bright, clear day. I rejoiced in the thought that the hour had finally come to redeem the sins of centuries, to take charge of nature's gift to man; and now the trickery and authoritarianism of those who are supposed to look after an ordered society, but who deal with the welfare and happiness of men according to their own whim. But why these millions . . . allow themselves to be chained, why they don't with the power of determined will stamp out these bloodsuckers and vermin, is as incomprehensible as the unconcern one observes at news of violence and murders. The deity itself seems to be at odds with itself at having created mankind (*in its image?*) and struck it blind and let it recognize its errors either very late or not at all. Strangely enough, even if one has to abandon the *idea* that people will be guided by reason, not even one's personal advantage which is the most powerful motive and outweighs all other considerations, is able to give them the incentive to move ahead.

Obviously, the most expensive form of government is that in which it is up to the head of the state to determine its income and to proceed with the expenditures at will.

Necessarily, one has to give due regard to those who partly belong to the majority and are well-known by their family name, and partly who bask in the rays of the reflected sun; also general court hangers-on and know-it-all informants. We have never gotten beyond that stage of history in this wonderful land of Austria. The proclamation of March 4 promised us a constitution which would be the basis for a constitutional government, and they even fantasized about popular representation. But undisputed power is clearly too attractive, for anyone to be in a great hurry to let barriers be imposed and to have to deal with undesirable opposition. And everything possible is being done to anticipate this if it should come to pass (?). For our parliament-to-be will be like those blessed spirits who must go twice through the purification of purgatory before salvation. . . . based on property, how many cattle and pigs one owns. After all, that is desirable in a parliament, especially when it is expected to approve everything.

But let us not brood over things which lie in the future. Perhaps the people will forget that they had been promised something, or at least what it was that had been promised. It would not be the first time that they had been given an X for a U (*a common idiom, meaning deceived*).

Incidentally, our appropriate ministerial department continues to work diligently (?) on the new . . . and if we get old enough, we can see the young phoenix rising from the ashes. They are a lot of magicians and alchemists who with their divining rods stomp fountains (?) from the ground, who destroy disagreeable rebels with a flick of their eyebrows, who in their omniscience find the philosophers stone and coax watery streams from sure rocks. Only one thing that the wise ones have not yet learned: to learn and assuage the spirit of the time. How these architects are toiling, dragging materials together from South and North, from East and West; while they rejoice in holding the old heterogeneous contraption together with the same old clamps, a storm comes over night and buries the charlatans under the rubble. Let us hope that the sequence of events does not end with the year 1849 and that the time will come which will put serious demands on us; it will be up to us whether we will pass the test or not. At any rate, it is our duty to devote all our strength to that goal and to take advantage of everything that will bring us closer to it.

I learn from the Prague (a newspaper, presumably), that the Prussian comedian, together with his clowns and mountebanks, has rather laid an egg and failed badly in his tragicomic performance. He started on an undertaking for which he did not have the necessary muscle and his supporting cast was too clumsy. especially, the roles of the main parts were so badly cast, that even the wittiest and most accomplished could not save the piece from failure. I have no doubt that the public in general will accord it its heartfelt jeers. What I am wondering about mostly is that the play has not been canceled long ago, with a better acquisition to grace the stage, or that one did not simply close the theater. Since the present cast is neither effective for instruction nor for entertainment, it is too bad that the nice sums of money expended on it produce nothing but anger and gall. Of course the play director is allied with the devil, and one will be unable to get rid of him until one resorts to the sign of the cross whose use he had disapproved of for some rather long time. However, perhaps a savior will turn up who will force the evil spirit to yield and then to render the possessed one himself harmless. Now we shall see how things will evolve.

As I hear, my beloved home city has been honored with the assignment of an entire battalion (?), God knows for what Our philistines will heave a sigh of relief in the assurance that they can sit peacefully behind the stove and can comfortably eat up the profits brought to them by their speculative spirit. No more nightly serenades to disturb their sleep, for the ghosts have departed and with them the mischief and high spirits which held sway here at times. The underhanded diplomat is now able without interference to look after the welfare of the city as *primus inter pares*, and to rescind his order. (*I don't understand this, but that is what it says*).

There follows a Latin quote which I will not attempt to translate, and a final lengthy sentence in German of which I can read only about half the words - something about brave sons who achieved . . . in heroic struggle for prince and fatherland. This is, of course, satire.

Right on, dear Jakob!

Greetings to yours and to Prinzl and . . . and . . .

your friend

Karl (?)