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# **Hegel in Berlin - Jacques D'Hondt**

A summary and comment of the d'Hondt's

Stephen Cowley

## Content

Introduction (Stephen Cowley) . . . . .	3
Jacques D'Hondt - Hegel en son Temps . . . . .	4
Hegel's situation in Prussian society . . . . .	4
Protectors . . . . .	5
Hegel's Enemies . . . . .	9
The Attack on Fries . . . . .	11
The German Student Fraternities . . . . .	12
An Advocate for the Oppressed . . . . .	13
The clandestine Hegel . . . . .	17
The judgment of Marx and Engels . . . . .	19
Conclusion . . . . .	21

(The article below is reproduced at [hegel.net](http://hegel.net) with the kind permission of its author, Stephen Cowley<sup>1</sup>. It first appeared 10/2016 on the [hegel.net](http://hegel.net) Hegel mailing list<sup>2</sup> and was then first published 12/2016 as article with the pictures below on his blog 'Hegelian News & Reviews'<sup>3</sup>)

This post analyses French Hegel scholar Jacques D'Hondt's path-breaking book *Hegel en son Temps* [Hegel in his Time] (1968), which interpreted Hegel as a progressive political reformer in his Berlin period (1818-1831).

## Introduction (Stephen Cowley)

In this post, I discuss Jacques D'Hondt's book *Hegel en son Temps* (Paris: Editions Sociales, 1968). There is an English translation by John Burbidge (*Hegel in his Time*, 1995) and the book also appeared in German, Italian and Japanese. This was one of a pair of books by D'Hondt, the other being *Hegel Secret* (1968), that challenged previous beliefs about Hegel's political stance that drew on the biographies of Karl Rosenkranz and Rudolf Haym, by stressing instead Hegel's liberal milieu and acquaintances. *Hegel Secret* covered Hegel's early reading, social life and friendships.

D'Hondt's conclusion was that Hegel's early views approached those of the moderate Girondins more than those of the Jacobins in terms of the parties of the French revolution and that he remained a reformer in his Berlin period. My own view is that the incompatible versions of D'Hondt and earlier interpreters make necessary a close examination of particular positions and their context. Biographers tend to redraw Hegel in their own image.

I have already discussed Jacques D'Hondt (1920-2012) on his own account in my review<sup>4</sup> of Fiorinda Li Vigni's biography of him. I have found him well worth reading. Some of the evidence he provides is circumstantial and thus not convincing in isolation, but the account of Hegel's close relationships with several Prussian reformers, three of whom edited volumes of the first collected edition of his works, extends our scholarly picture of the Prussian politics of the day and Hegel's relations to its leading figures.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://groups.io/g/hegel/topics>

<sup>3</sup> <https://scottish-hegelian.blogspot.com/2016/12/hegel-in-berlin-part-four-jacques-dhondt.html>

<sup>4</sup> <http://scottish-hegelian.blogspot.co.uk/2012/03/biography-of-french-hegel-scholar.html>

Much of what was new in *Hegel en son Temps* relied on Johannes Hoffmeister's edition of Hegel's *Briefe von und an Hegel* [Letters by and to Hegel] (Hamburg: Meiner, 1952-54), which includes notes drawn by Hoffmeister from Prussian state records. There is a complete French translation of the letters in *Hegel: Correspondance I-III* (trans. Carrère. Gallimard, 1962-67). The letters written by Hegel are available in English in *Hegel: The Letters* (trans. Butler & Seiler. Indiana: UP, 1984). D'Hondt's observation that letters sent by the public post could be and were opened by the authorities and that Hegel and others knew this is also established in *Hegel Secret*.

The following is a summary of *Hegel en son Temps*, noting the sources used (all of which are public and printed) and the main factual points made. Page references are to the French edition. It should be noted that much of the material covered here is followed closely in D'Hondt's later *Hegel: Biographie* (1999).

## **Jacques D'Hondt - Hegel en son Temps**

In this book, Jacques D'Hondt undertakes to "look around the texts" ( 8) because Hegel, he says, "cannot publish all that he thinks" ( 8) In an important qualification, he acknowledges that the "conservative aspects" of Hegel's thought are "well known and indisputable" (10).

### **Hegel's situation in Prussian society**

D'Hondt stresses Hegel's precarious situation in Prussian society in chapters on his career, family and political situation. He cites from Hoffmeister's edition of Hegel's *Berliner Schriften* [Berlin Writings] (1956), including a critique of Walter Scott's *Life of Napoleon* that objected to Scott's conservatism. He notes Hegel's visit to General Carnot in Magdeburg (*Briefe* II, 340), the progressive air of Prussia under the reformers Hardenburg, Altenstein, Stein and Scharnhorst (not all of whom were Prussian). He cites Marxist scholars and Friedrich Engels in *The Situation in Germany*. Hegel wrote that for Protestants, "our universities and our schools are our churches." (54, *Briefe* II, 89). He cites Niethammer's reference to the "öffentliche und öffnende" [public and opened] postal system (*Briefe* II, 85), omitted from Karl Hegel's edition of Hegel's letters (1887), noting that this led to self-censorship in letters unless these were privately delivered. Hegel's private letters to Niethammer express disdain for the Restoration and for those who tied their literary reputations to it. The real tide of politics lay elsewhere, he thought. In

1821, a royal edict prefers the term “*evangelisch*” over “*protestant*”. Religious freedom was an issue for Protestants in Bavaria.

In Prussia, there was little to restore, for little of what existed before had been destroyed. In Prussia, the decree of censorship of 18 October 1819 delayed appearance of the *Philosophy of Right* (*Briefe* II, 447n). Hegel admired the Girondins, the *Code Civil*, constitutional government and property rights. D'Hondt claims that the *Philosophy of Right* benefited from Hegel's protected status and his facility in rendering his views obscure. Ernst Bloch disagreed with this in *Subject and Object* (1952). D'Hondt proceeds to devote separate sections to Hegel's protectors and enemies in Prussia.

### **Protectors**

D'Hondt stresses the importance of Karl August von Hardenberg (1750-1822) as the most committed reformer amongst Prussian politicians. At one stage, Hardenberg imprisoned “reactionary” opponents (70, citing Mehring). He had outlined his political program in a “Memoir of Riga”. Hegel mentioned Jacobi as a liberal in a letter to Victor Cousin. The Prussians recruited many *Aufklärer* [friends of the Enlightenment] from Bavaria, which was not the action of reactionary ideologues. Hardenberg valued education as part of his political strategy, but left this task to Altenstein, who invited Hegel to Berlin as Professor of Philosophy in 1818. [This suggests that the chair was a government appointment. - SC] Hardenberg was “anti-religious” (63). He favored secular public education, opposed feudalism and wanted a national representation. This would accomplish a modernization as in France, but without bloodshed or revolution.



Count Hardenberg, by F. G. Weitsch

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Altenstein (1770-1840) was bolder politically than Hardenberg. Altenstein wanted: the end of serfdom, economic liberalism; the end of corporations as a system [these have a place in Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*]; suppression of church benefices; army reform; municipal elections; and public education, including at the new University of Berlin. He was Minister of Finance (1808-10), then after a gap, Minister of Public Education (1817-39). Compulsory education stopped the use of child labor. The nobility however feared it as a means of social emancipation. Altenstein was a friend of Hegel's friend at Jena, Knebel and supported publication of Knebel's works, the third volume of which fell foul of the censor. Altenstein wanted Berlin to be the cultural center of Germany. He promoted unification of the Protestant churches. He allowed "fanatical orthodoxy" to become entrenched in the theological faculty with Hengstenberg, but protected the liberalism of Schleiermacher. He met with denunciation from "the orthodox and the nobility".

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<sup>5</sup> [https://3.bp.blogspot.com/-WvUV3-HX\\_u8/WEcoJG53YLI/AAAAAAAAA64/dAVEJu3JFj0ai\\_SPQbaLgg5qfNVhaZKpACEw/s1600/Hardenberg.jpg](https://3.bp.blogspot.com/-WvUV3-HX_u8/WEcoJG53YLI/AAAAAAAAA64/dAVEJu3JFj0ai_SPQbaLgg5qfNVhaZKpACEw/s1600/Hardenberg.jpg)

There was a period of reaction after Altenstein left the education ministry, which took place under his successor Eichhorn from 1840. Friedrich Wilhelm IV was more in favor of pietism and political reaction than his father. Hence, from 1840, Hegelianism fell out of favor. Eichhorn replaced Altenstein as Minister of Education. Julius Stahl succeeded Edouard Gans. Schelling was called to Berlin to combat and refute Hegelianism.

[KF: see also the article [Why has the Hegelian School declined after Hegel's death?](#)<sup>6</sup>

Johannes Schulze (1786-1869) was Hegel's most immediate protector as director of higher education at the ministry of education. He followed several of Hegel's courses in Berlin and helped with publication of the *Freundesausgabe* edition of Hegel's *Werke* [Works], for which he edited the second edition of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1841). Schulze knew Seume, Rückert, Görres, Sinclair and Gneisenau. He was an active freemason. [D'Hondt discusses radical freemasonry in *Hegel Secret*.] He opposed the Prussian repression of "demagogues". After a meeting with the Duke of Saxe-Weimar, who also opposed this, he was under surveillance. Schulze also spent time with Hegel and Böttinger in Dresden in 1824.



Johannes Schulze, engraving by Hans Meyer.

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<sup>6</sup> [why\\_has\\_the\\_hegelian\\_school\\_declined\\_after\\_hegels\\_death.htm](#)

The historian Friedrich von Raumer (1781-1873) also supported Hegel. D'Hondt cites Cavaignac's description of him as a liberal, drawn towards English models of administration. He was the author of *Polens Untergang* (1832) and became a deputy in 1848.

The Prussian bureaucracy also participated in efforts at reform. It recruited from different social classes and earned Hegel's admiration. Hegel is seen by some as the philosopher of the Prussian state. In this regard Maublanc relies on Lucien Herr and others in his book on *Marxism and Teaching* (1935). D'Hondt argues that the Scottish philosopher Robert Flint completely misapprehends Hegel when he accuses him of seeing life through rose-tinted spectacles and notes that he was a state appointee. [D'Hondt cites a French translation of some of Flint's writings, *La Philosophie de l'Histoire en Allemagne*, Paris, 1878). Flint was an opponent of the Hegelianism of Edward Caird and others in Scotland. - SC]

Far from being omnipotent, Hegel was unable to appoint Carové as his assistant in 1818. Carové was arrested in 1819 over a publication on the Sand affair (*Briefe* II, 455-68). Hegel then chose von Henning, who was imprisoned for ten weeks on suspicion of demagoguery (*Briefe* II, 271). Edouard Gans (1797-1839) was allowed by Hegel to teach philosophy of right from 1825. Gans was the son of a Jewish merchant friendly with Hardenberg. He converted outwardly to Christianity (D'Hondt refers to a book by Geiger on this) and was extraordinary professor from 1815 and ordinary professor from 1828. He knew Heinrich Heine and Varnhagen. The Prince-royal accused Gans to Hegel of turning his students into republicans (*Briefe* III, 472n). D'Hondt argues that Hegel was an influence through his ideas more than institutionally. He was not asked to join the Berlin Academy of Sciences.

Many early admirers of the French revolution, such as Schelling and Görres, became reactionaries. Other reactionary figures included Schuckmann, Wittgenstein and Eichhorn. Protestant orthodoxy was the dominant force amongst the people and at the Court. Hegel's opponents in the realm of political ideas included Ancillon, Haller, von Savigny and Stahl. Schulze rejected Rudolf Haym's accusation that Hegel was at the service of "reaction" after the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle (this is cited in Müller's *Hegel* (1959)).

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<sup>7</sup> [https://2.bp.blogspot.com/-s3j5NIeLvJA/WEcqy\\_8U2uI/AAAAAAAAA7A/weQiW2vh1ccT3Qh24Pp\\_tSihQcifU1jmQCLcB/s1600/Johannes\\_Schulze\\_by\\_Hans\\_Meyer.jpg](https://2.bp.blogspot.com/-s3j5NIeLvJA/WEcqy_8U2uI/AAAAAAAAA7A/weQiW2vh1ccT3Qh24Pp_tSihQcifU1jmQCLcB/s1600/Johannes_Schulze_by_Hans_Meyer.jpg)

**Up to here, D'Hondt relies mainly on Hegel's letters and the following sources (usually citing the titles in French)**

- Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie\*
- G Blanqui - *La vie quotidienne en Allemagne à l'ère romantique* [Daily life in Germany in the Romantic Era] (Paris, 1958)
- Cavaignac - *La Formation de la Prusse contemporaine* [The Formation of contemporary Prussia] (Paris, 1891)
- Cornu - *Marx et Engels* (Paris, 1955)
- Kuno Fischer - *Leben* (1901)
- A Fournier - *Historical Studies III* (Prague, 1885, German),
- L Geiger - *History of the Jews in Berlin* (1871, German)
- Karl Hegel - *My Life and Memories* (1900, German)
- F Mehring - *Essays on Prussian History* (1952, German),
- Friedrich Engels - *The Situation in Germany (MEGA I)*
- K Hengsberger - *Life of I. von Sinclair* (1920, German)
- Reimann - *Principal Currents of German Literature 1750-1848* (1956, German)
- Edouard Gans - *The Right of Inheritance in Medieval France* (Paris, 1845)
- Spenlé - *Rahel Varnhagen* (Paris, 1910)
- G-E Müller *Hegel* (1959, German)
- Hoffmeister - *Dokumente* (1936)
- Droz - *L'Allemagne et la Révolution française*
- G Weill - *L'Eveil des Nationalités* (Paris, 1930).]

## **Hegel's Enemies**

During the Restoration, the king turned from Hardenberg to Metternich. Hegel was invited to court once, in 1818, perhaps by Princess Wilhelmine, the daughter of Frederick V and protector of Sinclair. The king was attached to absolutism. In one story, a courtier said to him that Hegel gave the king the right only to “put the dot on the”i”“. The King replied”And if he does not do so?” In 1826, the *Gazette de Voss* reported a celebration of Hegel's birthday, which was close to Goethe's, but also to the king's. Varnhagen comments on this. The king had the censors look at coverage of private and public events.

The successor as monarch, Friedrich Wilhelm IV was educated by Ancillon and accepted the ideas of Haller, which Hegel rejected in *Philosophy of Right* (para 281n). D'Hondt cites his views from Cornu. Friedrich Wilhelm IV reportedly disliked the Jewish circle (Varnhagen, the banker Bloch, Beer,

Mendelssohn, Gans) frequented by Hegel. Hegel rejected the idea of the minority (*Unmündigkeit*) of the people, conceived as children in need of protection, development and education (see Nohl's *Hegels Theologische Jugendschriften*, 45, 162).

Hegel praised Frederick II (*Phil. of History*, trans. Gibelin, 393). Von Thaden said that Hegel was considered a royalist (*Briefe* II, 279). D'Hondt specifies that Hegel wanted a constitutional monarchy.

There were many writers against revolutionary ideas. These included F Ancillon, author of *Souveränität und Staatsverfassungen* [Sovereignty and State Constitutions] (1816), which long remained in print, and K.L. von Haller's *Restoration of Political Science* (1816), which was published in both French and German. [Haller's work is available for free on Kindle. – SC]

D'Hondt gives a very negative portrayal of Haller, drawing on Oeschu and Obermann and citing him only indirectly, though his work was available in French. He argues that Prussia had supported Haller through their ambassador in Switzerland, so in attacking him, Hegel was attacking elements of the court. [Haller was from Berne in Switzerland, near where Hegel had been a tutor. - SC] In *On the Constitution of Cortès* (1820), Haller attacked new Spanish institutions. Hegel's unfavourable treatment of Haller should be weighed against his criticisms of Rousseau and Fries. In the year after Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, Haller published a *Letter of [...] Haller to his Family to declare his Return to the Catholic Church* (1821). This move had been rumored for some time. Haller argued that the Reformation was a precursor of the French revolution. In this he agreed with Hegel, though for opposite reasons. Haller's reputation fell amongst Protestants.

Haller's former admirers turned to Karl von Savigny (1779-1861), who had written a reply to Hegel's friend Thibaud's *Necessity of a Universal Civil Law for Germany* (1814). In *The Vocation of our Time for Legislation and Legal Science* (1814), von Savigny argued against Thibaud for common law against the right of a legislature to codify and render laws uniform. Law, he said, rests on tradition and develops organically. This favored the particularism of the little German states and went against French models of reform.

**In this section, D'Hondt cites in addition to previously listed works**

- W Baur – *La Princesse Wilhelmine* (1886, in German)
- Franz Rosenzweig, *Hegel and the State* (1920)
- Varnhagen von Ense – *Pages de l'histoire prussienne* (1868)
- Friedrich Engels – *Revolution and Counter-revolution in Germany* (1851)
- W Oeschu – *History of Switzerland* (1903-13, in German)
- Obermann – *Germany 1815-49*, (1961, in German).]

We now turn to those whom Hegel's opponents called "demagogues". D'Hondt covers the Fries affair; the student reform societies, or *Burschenschaften*; Hegel's relations with six individuals subjected to repression; and Hegel's overall political response, which D'Hondt characterizes as a mixture of boldness and prudence.

### The Attack on Fries

The Fries affair for long gave Hegel a reputation as a servant of power. It relies on a few lines of the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right* (1821), which are cited by Robert Flint. D'Hondt argues that these lines do not bear the interpretation put on them. Hegel and Fries had met 20 years earlier at Jena, as competitors for academic preferment. Both gained doctorates in 1801 and taught as private tutors (*Privatdozenten*), hoping to progress to extraordinary, then ordinary professorships. Fries was younger than Hegel. Both became extraordinary professors in 1805. Fries espoused both Kantianism and sentimentalism.

Fries moved on to Heidelberg in 1805, which Hegel did only 11 years later. His teaching there was reckoned heavy (*schwer*). In a letter to Niethammer (*Briefe* I, 388), Hegel severely criticized Fries' *System of Logic* (1811). In the *Science of Logic* (1812-16), Hegel again criticized Fries, this time in print. Hence, his opposition is not owing solely to Fries role at the Wartburg Festival of 1817. Indeed, Hegel's friends Oken and Carové also spoke at Wartburg.

Fries in turn reviewed Hegel two years later, along with Herbart and other works, describing Hegel's *Science of Logic* as dogmatic metaphysics. In another letter, Hegel boasted that Fries had five or six hearers for his Logic class at Heidelberg, whilst Hegel had almost 70 (*Briefe* II, 154n, 381).

Fries' address at the Wartburg Festival in 1817 is contained in *The Wartburg Festival* by F. J. Fromann, the son of Hegel's publisher friend. [The version Hegel cites is in D. Kieser's *Das Wartburgfest* (1818). - SC]. Under pressure from Prussia, the government of Saxe-Weimar suspended Fries later that year. Hegel complained to Altenstein about subsequent criticism of him in the *Halle Journal* (*Berliner Schriften*, 750). The French visitor Victor Cousin noted Fries as a liberal in 1818. Both Hegel and Fries approved of Royer-Collard, he thought.

Boisserée had accused Fries of Teutonism and *Judenhass* in a letter to Goethe (see also Hegel's *Briefe* II, 418). It seems that Hegel wanted to warn the *Burschenschaften* against a false philosophical tendency. Hegel also opposed atomist social theories more generally in the *Philosophy of Right*.

### **The German Student Fraternities**

A new student fraternity movement (the *Burschenschaften*) grew up in Germany. It included many professors and students who had taken part in the wars of liberation (1813-15). The *Burschenschaften* succeeded the *Landmannschaften*, which were organized on regional, particularist lines. Their demands were moderate, as was typical of the liberalism of the Restoration years (1815-30). This was so in Europe generally, including France, as seen even in Mme de Stael and Benjamin Constant. It was foreseen that political power was to pass to the upper middle class. Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* is one example of this agenda.

The failings of the movement were noted by Hegel in his criticisms of "demagogues". Engels thought the "teutonic" enthusiasm a necessary phase. It meant that foreign loan words were rejected, medieval dress worn and anti-French feeling was evinced by some. Karl Förster noted Hegel as a moderating influence (*Briefe* II, 482n). Hegel enrolled his son in the French school in Berlin (*Briefe* IV, 127).

The reactionary writer and agent of the Tsar, August von Kotzebue, was murdered on 23 March 1819 in Mannheim by a student K.L. Sand. Sand was executed in May 1820. Metternich and others used this to crack down on the *Burschenschaft*, press, political reform movements and the universities. In his account of Karl Solger, Hegel cites Solger's repulsion for Sand's stupidity, coldness and pride. Such feeling was generally felt and variously expressed at the time. A colleague of Hegel, De Wette, wrote to Sand's mother. He was subsequently suspended from teaching. De Wette was a friend of Fries. Hegel, Schleiermacher and others took some care for De Wette's short-term finances when he left for Weimar.

Many members of the *Burschenschaft* met at Frommann's bookshop. Frommann's sister, Betty Wesselhöft, brought up Hegel's son. Her brothers led the politicization of the *Burschenschaft*. Frommann's son published an account of it. [There are two accounts from Frommann the publisher: Friedrich Johannes Frommann, *Das Burschenfest auf der Wartburg am 18ten und 19ten October 1817* (1818) and Dietrich Keiser, *Das Wartburgfest am 18 October 1817* (1818). The latter is more detailed and contains an account of Fries' speech there. Both are available to read for free on the internet. – SC]

**D'Hondt additionally cites:**

- F J Frommann – *The Wartburg Festival* (Jena, 1818, in German) Friedrich Engels – *Arndt*.
- E Ponteil – *L'Eveil des Nationalités* (Paris, 1960)
- Obermann – *Germany 1815-49* (Berlin, 1849).
- Schnabel – *History of Germany in the 19th Century* (1949, in German)]

**An Advocate for the Oppressed**

D'Hondt claims: "A thousand strong and subtle links connected Hegel with the progressive bourgeois ideology of his time." (171) Legal archives in Germany contain evidence of Hegel's actions on behalf of politically suspect persons in his Berlin period. Students and professors were affected by government sanctions. Arnold Ruge, the future editor of the *Halle Annuals*, was sentenced to prison in 1826. Others left for Switzerland or America.

Hegel's letters make allusions, often veiled, to events. The Archives of the Prussian Home office are D'Hondt's major source here. Hoffmeister published extracts from these in notes to his edition of Hegel's *Letters*. These extracts however, are incomplete. Hoffmeister has four pages of notes on Victor Cousin, but refers to four volumes of Prussian documents. D'Hondt also doubts Hoffmeister's judgment (172, 179), though he thinks he has tried to be objective. He thinks Hoffmeister's notion of the "innocence" of those accused of reformist activity is naive, for example. [However, there were laws on means of advocating reform, albeit not what D'Hondt would have wished, that determined guilt or innocence; and there is a state interest and arguably a public interest in opposing violent revolution. – SC]

After 1813, patriots awaited a constitution from Friedrich Wilhelm III, but time passed and only a Council of State was established in place of more far reaching reform.

There were various pretexts and motives for persecutions. It must have been obvious to the police that Hegel sat opposite them, not at their side, in these affairs. D'Hondt gives a list of events between 1811 and 1831, particularly those concerning Asverus, Ulrich, Carové, Förster and Victor Cousin. Various pretexts were used, but the motives remained the same. Let us consider the individuals concerned.

Firstly, Leopold von Henning (1791-1866) was arrested on the basis of letters sent to him and his mother-in-law (*Briefe* II, 482n). Hence, he was already under surveillance as a friend of Förster, Carové and Asverus. Carové had been denounced by von Wittgenstein to Altenstein. According to Varnhagen (*Briefe* III, 365n), Henning had defended Napoleon. He had sent information on Napoleon to Hegel, as did van Ghent from the Netherlands. This concerned works forbidden in Prussia. [Henning later edited the *Science of Logic* for Hegel's Works.]

Secondly, Gustav Asverus (1798-1843) was arrested following a duel which came to the attention of the University of Jena. His letters were opened and he was accused of making a death threat against a French sympathizer (*Briefe* II, 440-41). This inquiry lasted from 1820 to 1826, when he was pardoned by the King.

Thirdly, Karl Ulrich was also arrested in relation to duelling in an investigation that lasted from 1819 to 1823 (*Briefe* II, 499n). [Some claim that duelling was used as a pretext for such arrests. – SC]

Fourthly, Friedrich Carové (1789-1852) had published a pamphlet *On the Assassination of Kotzebue* (1819). He was a founder of the *Burschenschaften* and had spoken at the Wartburg Festival in 1817. Hoffmeister cites von Wittgenstein's denunciation of the pamphlet, which was written from a Hegelian standpoint [in the sense of presenting itself as trying to mediate between extremes. – SC] Wittgenstein promoted a refutation of the pamphlet by Pauli and opposed Carové being allowed to teach.

Fifthly, Friedrich Förster (1791-1868) had fought and been wounded in the Wars of Liberation. He was the author of patriotic poetry. By 1818, he felt deceived by the lack of reform and wrote as much in an article on the Weimar revue *Nemesis*, criticizing the Prussian chief of police, von Kamptz. Förster was suspended from a chair at the Staff College, his accusations against von Kamptz having been refuted (*Briefe* II, 468). By 1823, following a court martial, the matter was resolved. [Förster later co-edited

Volume 16 of Hegel's *Werke* (*Vermischte Schriften*, 1834). This was re-edited for the Glockner edition. - SC]



Friedrich Förster (creator of image unknown).

Sixthly, Victor Cousin was arrested in Dresden in August 1824. [D'Hondt dwells on this, probably in part because of its notoriety in France. Cousin was a major figure in French philosophy. He was a liberal who played a central role in the institutionalization of philosophy in the French education system in the 19th century. – SC] There are police, judicial, diplomatic and political elements to this story. Cousin had been denied any official post in France since 1820. [Prior to that he had lectured at the Sorbonne on the history of philosophy. He was reinstated in 1828-29 and delivered a famous course of lectures, including a volume on Scottish Philosophy, the opening of which I translated for the *Edinburgh Review* (1993). For a time, Cousin presented Scottish thinkers like Thomas Reid as a liberal middle way between (German) idealism and (French/English) empiricism. – SC] Cousin was in Dresden in relation to a wedding of his

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<sup>8</sup> [https://1.bp.blogspot.com/-YkdNN3lIjB0/WEc1Odi5yfl/AAAAAAAAA7M/ox3VHphbQs4FmTdHaWCIBdelHTDLgxA0QCLcB/s1600/Friedrich\\_F%25C3%25B6rster\\_1815.jpg](https://1.bp.blogspot.com/-YkdNN3lIjB0/WEc1Odi5yfl/AAAAAAAAA7M/ox3VHphbQs4FmTdHaWCIBdelHTDLgxA0QCLcB/s1600/Friedrich_F%25C3%25B6rster_1815.jpg)

employer's family. He was arrested and held in Berlin for three and a half months (*Briefe* III, 376n). Hegel met Cousin in Dresden and after his arrest wrote a letter on his behalf.

Cousin had been under surveillance since he had offered accommodation to Santa Rosa, a revolutionary from Piedmont who later died in Greece, but was then living under a false name in Paris. The French government spoke out publicly for Cousin, though their Police had been in contact with the Prussian authorities to warn them about him. This duplicity gave rise to a diplomatic exchange.

In the course of investigations, Cousin had to admit to meeting various German political figures in Paris, Switzerland and Germany. Between 1820 and 1825 he was active in liberal politics in opposition to the Holy Alliance. Hegel had known Cousin since 1817. According to Cousin, this was based on political agreement. [It's pretty clear that common intellectual interests were also at work though. – SC] Cousin admitted to meeting Villers and Böttiger in Dresden. He also met Hegel there. According to D'Hondt, Cousin's liberal sympathies become lukewarm after his trial.

So Hegel helped many accused people and frequented liberal circles in Berlin. There was an opposition group, which included the son of Niethammer and Gottlieb, the brother of Hegel's wife, Marie. He often met Carové, Förster, Gans and the bookshop owner Reimer. D'Hondt mentions several others, including French and Italian liberals who he knew through Cousin and some German admirers of the French revolution, including Oelsner (see D'Hondt's *Hegel Secret*). This group had their quarrels. They remained weak as a political force in Germany at this time.

Senior figures, including the Chief of Police von Kamptz and the Home Secretary took personal parts in these seemingly trivial accusations and inquiries. The government of Saxe-Weimar issued a diplomatic note on Asverus. Hegel lodged bail for Asverus (*Briefe* II, 216-17, 239-40n). Altenstein and Hardenberg wrote letters over Ulrich. Hegel's name appeared and reappeared.

The results of Hegel's interventions seem limited. He held no sway over the course of events. His motives are disputed: did he wish to reconcile the reformers with the government? Rosenkranz's account of Hegel and Cousin is false (Rosenkranz, 361, D'Hondt, 221). Hegel's influence was meagre. Public opinion limited the repression. Hegel's letter was simply indicative of a public opinion hostile to repression and the solidarity of the "republic of letters". There was no servility on Hegel's part, even in this success.

P Reiman's judgment on Hegel (*Courants principaux*, 533) and that of Schnabel (*Histoire* II, 261) must thus be modified.

Some of the persecuted individuals bore witness for Hegel. Altenstein said that Hegel opposed disorder amongst the youth. Certainly, Hegel disliked some features of the *Burschenschaften*, for example dueling (*Briefe* II, 466).

Carové went on to translate French writers into German, including Victor Cousin, Benjamin Constant, Diderot, Royer-Collard, Sismondi and Stendhal. Förster spoke at length at Hegel's funeral (Rosenkranz, 566). Hegel opposed anti-semitism, teutonism and individualist anarchism. Henning became more reactionary, but only much later under Eichhorn. So did Cousin, but in doing so he came to prefer Schelling over Hegel.

Hegel appeared in person at several student events, though in one case along with von Savigny, D'Hondt concedes. Geiger's book on Berlin is a source of the story of Hegel drinking each year to the fall of the Bastille (Vol II, 546). Cousin described Hegel as approving of the French revolution, as liberal but not republican.

#### **D'Hondt cites**

- G Bourgin – “Cousin et Santa Rosa” in *Revue Historique*, 1919.
- Charles Breville – “L'Arrestation de Victor Cousin en Allemagne” in *Nouvelle Revue de Paris*, 1910
- Victor Cousin – “Souvenirs d'Allemagne” in *Revue des deux mondes*, 1866)
- L Geiger – *Berlin 1688-1840* (1895)
- B Knoop – *Victor Cousin, Hegel et le romantisme française* (Berlin, 1932)
- Thureau-Dangin – *Le parti libérale sous la RestauRestauration* (Paris, 1876).]

#### **The clandestine Hegel**

Hegel's actions show a mixture of boldness and prudence. The “young Hegelians” knew nothing of Hegel's interventions. The police archives at least, were not open to them. Since then, surviving letters

give a more rounded view of Hegel. D'Hondt says: "Hegel did not envisage starting an implacable conflict with the established authorities; his political thought was not so steadfast; he was not a revolutionary." (240)

Rosenkranz naively talks of a clandestine visit of Hegel to a prison by boat. But consider, Hegel had been an orator of a political club at Tübingen. He had composed many tracts in manuscript. He had published J J Cart's *Letters* in translation with annotations<sup>9</sup>. He knew police methods, e.g. opening of private letters. He sent some letters via friends rather than through the public post. Ulrich asked him to send any reply through a friend (2 Aug 1822). He wrote to his wife in Austria that letters were read and should not contain political content (*Briefe* III, 48-49).

This reflects a calculation of risk. It is said that Hegel was merely keeping an eye on "youthful disorder". His acquaintances, judicial interventions and correspondence lead D'Hondt to propose instead amending our view of Hegel's overall political sympathies.

In 1819, he regretted that 30 years had been spent in "fear and hope" (*Briefe* II, 219). The police had noted his presence in Dresden in 1820 with Förster and Yxküll (*Briefe* II, 482n). In 1821 though, he regretted "demagoguery" in a letter to Niethammer (*Briefe* II, 271-72). D'Hondt notes that this was an "openable" letter. [But still, Hegel did not have to write it. – SC] Hegel added:

"As you know, on one side I am an anxious man, on the other, I like tranquillity, and it is not so agreeable to see a storm rise each year, even if I can be persuaded that only a few drops at most will touch me. But you also know that being at the center of things has an advantage: there, one knows what is for the gallery, and one is more certain of one's own concerns and position." (253, *Briefe* II, 271-72)

There was not much risk up to the death of Hardenberg in 1822. The reactionaries had their own problems. [This is a rare acknowledgment by D'Hondt. – SC] They wanted free universities, and thus not to be seen carrying out a witch hunt. Hegel had Schulze and Altenstein to rely on.

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<sup>9</sup> [hegels-edition-of-jean-jacques-cart1.htm](#)

### D'Hondt additionally cites

- E Voigt – *Die deutsche jakobinische Literatur* (1955).]

### The judgment of Marx and Engels

Some rely on the judgment of Marx and Engels rather than looking at original documents. They were activists with experience of political men. They knew nothing (says D'Hondt) of Hegel's revolutionary youth, the Tübingen club or the Cart *Letters* and judged him basically by his published works. Let us look at them in turn.

The young Friedrich Engels wrote several relevant essays between 1839 and 1842. He became a Hegelian as his early bourgeois liberal and Pietist views radicalized. In 1839, he comments that Hegelianism is spreading. When Schelling came to Berlin in 1839, Engels took Hegel's side in his essay *Schelling on Hegel* (1841). In his essay on Arndt, he wishes for a unification of the ideas of Börne and Hegel. Perhaps the official acceptance of Hegel was owing to Altenstein and a more liberal age, he muses. So much, says D'Hondt, for the "Prussian philosophy of the state" attributed to Hegel.

Engels thinks that Strauss in theology, Gans and Ruge in politics were leading figures of the age. This is in the early 1840s. Ruge is praised for his "aesthetic criticism"; Gans for continuing the philosophy of history to the current day. (It was said at this time that Hegel had not written the final lessons of the *Philosophy of History*. Manuscript evidence shows that this was false.) The Hegelian left was a refuge for "free spirits". Hegel represented the bourgeois ideal of a constitutional monarchy.

Marx's *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (1844) marked a break for him. In this work, Marx is settling accounts with the most prestigious bourgeois theoretician. Already between 1830 and 1848 the German proletariat was a political presence. The bourgeoisie was threatened with losing political power before it had gained it. "The gravedigger knocks at the door of the maternity ward." (269) D'Hondt says that thereafter Hegel was advanced in relation to reality, but conservative in relation to the revolutionary programme.

In the *Critique*, Marx wished to a) convince himself and others of the falsity of the *Philosophy of Right* and b) show how it constrains its literal interpreters and believers. Its economic basis is weak and it misrepresents reality through idealism and mystification. He points out contradictions in the bourgeois state. Marx did not publish this work, because his thought was still advancing. His question then, is not Hegel in his time. He does point out conservative elements, even in the context of the time. D'Hondt comments: "The practical conditions of publication of the work imposed on him [Hegel] prudence and accommodation." (273)

Marx's critique of *Philosophy of Right* para 310, in which elected representatives are to be examined by the government, is astringent, but not typical. It breathes the arrogance of civil servants in Prussia, he says. Marx writes only that it is almost servile, noting that: "the point of view of Stein, Hardenberg, Schön was one thing; and that of Rochow, Arnim, Eichhorn was another." (MEGA I, 549-50)

Marx summarized his own work in *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859). He had criticized Hegel, he said, and seen that general political structures were based on material conditions of existence, which Hegel identified as "civil society". In 1842, Marx had written to Arnold Ruge, saying that he wished to:

"develop a critique of Hegelian natural law, in the degree to which it concerns the internal constitution. The heart of this critique is the struggle against constitutional monarchy, insofar as it is a bastard reality that completely contradicts itself and is [to be] surpassed." (277)

Yet he praised the French constitutional monarchy of 1830 as marking progress. Such a thing in the Prussia of 1820 would be more so, comments D'Hondt. Marx took himself to represent a higher standpoint, but he saw merit in Hegel within the ambit of bourgeois thought.

Both Marx and Engels often cited Hegel. In *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy* (1886), Engels argued that neither government nor liberals understood the revolutionary implications of Hegel's thought. He endorses Heinrich Heine's reading. There is a conservative element to the dialectic. Engels wrote: "It recognizes the justification of certain stages of development of cognition and society for their era and their conditions." (283, from *Feuerbach*) However, there is another, extraneous conservatism that arose when Hegel wished to build a definitive system. This goes against his own method. History came to an end with the constitution that Friedrich Wilhelm III promised in vain to his people. Engels wrote: "That is now the revolutionary side of Hegel's doctrine is stifled under the profusion of its conservative side." (284)

Engels goes no further than to contrast Hegel's system and method. He does not inquire into Hegel's position amongst his contemporaries. Hegel represented advanced bourgeois thought, but he did not go beyond it. The constitutional monarchy was a dawn in Hegel's eyes, but he did not foresee that it would have a dusk. In Engels' day, Hegel was considered a reactionary. The Hegel renaissance only happened much later. In *Feuerbach*, Engels said: "Hegel himself, despite the fairly frequent bursts of revolutionary anger in his work, seemed on the whole to lean more to the conservative side." (287)

D'Hondt cites Marx's boast about introducing Proudhon to Hegel's ideas (*Poverty of Philosophy* and Preface to second edition of *Capital* (1873)). [There are other accounts of this though, Proudhon and Marx being rivals at the time. – SC]

Engels wrote: "When [state] power protected Hegel, when it raised his doctrine almost to the rank of Prussian philosophy of the state, it committed a blunder that it now visibly regrets." (289) Marx's *Remarks on the Edict of the Three Censors* (Feb 1843, *MEGA* I) speaks similarly. Some of their letters, e.g. of 8-10 May 1870, (*Werke* 32) are of similar drift.

#### **D'Hondt cites**

- A Cornu – *Marx and Engels* (1955)
- Engels – *The bourgeois-democratic revolution in Germany*
- Engels [attrib. Marx] – *Revolution and counter-revolution in Germany*
- Engels – *The Situation in Germany* (1847)
- Engels - *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy* (1886)
- J Hyppolite – *Études sur Hegel et Marx* (Paris, 1955)
- Marx – *The German Ideology* (Berlin, 1953)
- Marx/Engels - *Gesamtausgabe* [Collected Edition] ("MEGA").]

#### **Conclusion**



Henschel's portrait of Hegel (In Heidelberg University).

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Under a sketch by Wilhelm Henschel, Hegel wrote: “Who knew me, will recognize me here.” It has a direct gaze, tight lips, the beginning of a caustic smile. The main thing we have to consider is his published works, but Hegel's personality also has an interest. It helps with the stress and shading with which we accentuate our reading of his works. The conditions under which his ideas spread is also interesting for the history of ideas.

It is clear that Hegel was not simply a reactionary, or a conformist. Yet he was not a revolutionary either. Berlin in 1820 was not going through a revolutionary era. [But then Europe in 1830 was and Hegel did not participate. -SC] D'Hondt writes:

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<sup>10</sup> [https://2.bp.blogspot.com/-2VqgPujzT3Y/WEcXyIVu\\_QI/AAAAAAAAA6s/ReQBArOjkgQSVq9QtlDQFWSkHYiKftcbQCEw/s1600/Henschel%2BHegel.PNG](https://2.bp.blogspot.com/-2VqgPujzT3Y/WEcXyIVu_QI/AAAAAAAAA6s/ReQBArOjkgQSVq9QtlDQFWSkHYiKftcbQCEw/s1600/Henschel%2BHegel.PNG)

“Hegel himself was not a man”cut from whole cloth“. Divergent and sometimes opposed tendencies shared his heart amongst themselves. [...] We think we have established that, as a whole, his concrete political and social activity was that of a man of progress. We would gladly class him as a reformist, if this term had not taken on a sometimes pejorative sense in his actual context. Let us say: a progressive reformer.” (297)

In this sense, Hegel has not received justice. Hardenberg is recognized as a reformer, Altenstein as a liberal – though these terms might be disputed. Varnhagen and Gans are called “friends of the people”. Förster, Carové and Cousin thought well of Hegel. The file on Hegel shows him to have been of a similar stamp to them in his practical politics.