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# THEODOR FONTANE BEFORE THE STORM



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THEODOR FONTANE

*Before the Storm*

*A Novel of the Winter of 1812–13*

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*Translated and edited with an Introduction by*  
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Introduction, Further reading, Translation, Chronology, list of Principal characters and Notes

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## INTRODUCTION

AIDED as we are by the development the art of the novel has undergone during the century and more that has passed since *Before the Storm* was first published, we are in a better position to read it with ease and understanding than its first readers seem to have been. By the year 1878 Fontane was in possession of a large reputation—as a poet, as a travel writer, as a reviewer and, most recently, as an author of ‘war books’—but he had not yet appeared before the public in the role that was subsequently to supersede all others, that of novelist; and when the first chapters of *Vor dem Sturm* began to appear in the pages of the magazine *Daheim* it seemed to many well-wishers that it was no accident that he had attained to the age of fifty-nine without publishing a novel, for it seemed to be a form for which he had little aptitude. The appearance of the completed work in book form later the same year seemed to confirm rather than confound the initial criticisms.

On the face of it, *Before the Storm* was a historical novel modelled, in a general sense, on the historical novels of Walter Scott, and more immediately on those of the still popular novelist Willibald Alexis, who had between 1832 and 1856 produced a series of eight novels dealing with episodes in the history of Prussia and, in particular, Brandenburg, one of which, *Isegrim* (1854), treated in fictional form the same events as those treated in *Before the Storm*: where the two novels differed, however, they seemed to differ to the disadvantage of Fontane, inasmuch as, though Alexis had not been a notably concise writer, he was concision itself compared with Fontane, who had employed some 700 pages to narrate a story reducible in its essence to a couple of paragraphs. The technique by which this feat had been achieved was to all appearance that which had characterized his most popular publication, the *Travels through the March of Brandenburg*, the first volume of which had appeared in 1862 and the third and most recent in 1873 (a fourth and final volume was to appear in 1882); and that

technique was the singular one of relinquishing all ambition for shape or directionality and allowing the course of the text to be determined entirely by what reflection, story, piece of history or topographical or architectural description happened to enter the author's mind (or even, indeed, to be lying on his desk) at any particular moment. So far as the *Travels* itself is concerned, the effect produced by this manner of presentation is that of an endlessly knowledgeable and eloquent *raconteur* who is willing to go on talking for as long as you are willing to listen to him; and the book is designed for, and made its essential appeal to, an age in which reading for entertainment occupied a larger part of civilized life than it does now; whether such informality and prolixity could be applied successfully to a 'historical novel' supposedly telling a story was, however, something that *Before the Storm* seemed to call into question. To many the book was, simply, a failure.

The objective facts about the novel do indeed seem to second that judgement. It is very long, yet the time-span covered by the events it depicts is, especially for a 'historical novel', very short: it commences on 24 December 1812 and the last ascertainable date is 7 February 1813, a period of just over six weeks. The action contained in this six-week period is divided into no fewer than eighty-one chapters (with an eighty-second chapter as an epilogue), which suggests an uncommonly large amount of action: yet, until the final quarter of the book, there is hardly any action at all—so little, indeed, that when so relatively trivial an incident as the nocturnal break-in at the manor house at Hohen-Vietz occurs in the thirty-first chapter the author entitles the chapter 'Something Happens'. Again, the novel neglects, as though on purpose, every kind of event which might of itself have caught the interest of the reader of a historical novel: Napoleon haunts its edges but, except in the context of brief recollections, never steps on to its stage; the surrender of York at Tauroggen is reported but not witnessed or described; the centre and possessors of power whose decisions and actions are a vital element of the story are heard of but never seen (the closest we come to the domain of government is the very aged and, by his own admission, wholly ineffectual Prince Ferdinand); the Wars of Liberation start a short time

after the novel stops. But if nothing is happening, either of a public or a private nature, what is the author filling all these dozens of chapters with?

Now, Fontane was himself aware what answer his first readers would give to this question. Writing to his wife, Emilie, on 29 August 1877, he reported that he was then engaged in correcting 'my celebrated Borodino chapter', which, he added, 'the critics of my novel, my wife included, will no doubt pronounce superfluous.' The chapter—Book III, Chapter 11—is devoted to a reading by a Captain von Meerheimb of an account of the Battle of Borodino as he experienced it. His audience is composed of the guests a retired cavalry captain, von Jürgass, has invited to lunch; the preceding chapter includes, in addition to a record of the conversation accompanying this lunch, the text of Jürgass's aunt's last will and testament, in which she bequeaths to him the wealth that enables him to live in the style in which he has been depicted as living, and a retelling of a story of a regimental escapade of Jürgass's youth. A large part of the lunchtime conversation is taken up by an excursus on the names of the kings of Denmark. The chapter which follows the Borodino chapter includes a translation, by one of the novel's central figures, Lewin von Vitzewitz, of a 14-line French nursery rhyme, together with his landlady's reaction when he reads it to her. Wherever we look in the novel, in fact, we find page after page that its critics did indeed find 'superfluous': the extended discussion of the merits of the inferior poet Pastor Schmidt of Werneuchen, for example (Book I, Chapter 15); or Aunt Schorlemmer's recollections of her life as a Herrnhut missionary in Greenland (Book II, Chapter 16); or the playbill, reproduced in French, for the New Year's Eve dramatic performance at Schloss Guse (Book II, Chapter 19); or the visit to Lehnin abbey and a second lunch with Jürgass (Book III, Chapter 15); or the story of the Woman in White (Book IV, Chapter 12); or the poems of Novalis, Hölderlin, John Prince and others inserted into the text; or, more generally, the large quantity of apparently gratuitous information to be encountered everywhere and the long stretches of apparently aimless talk (about half the novel's text is talk). When these were not pronounced simple superfluities,

they were accounted for as a product of the author's need to pad out a very thin plot, or, more concretely, to fill in the space between Berndt von Vitzewitz's announcement to his son that he intends to act against the supposedly defeated and demoralized Napoleon on his own account if the government does not act against him (Book I, Chapter 4) and the execution of this threat (Book IV, Chapters 17-19): the outcome, on either supposition, being a repetition of the style of the *Travels through the March of Brandenburg* in a place where something a lot more rigorous and purposeful would have been much more in order.

Fontane, however, considered criticism in this direction unjustified; he believed that the purpose of his novel, and therefore its form, had been misunderstood. One critic who seemed to have misunderstood it was the writer and poet Paul Heyse, and to him Fontane wrote a defence of *Before the Storm*. 'Do you not think', he said in a letter of 9 December 1878,

that, beside novels, such as for example 'Copperfield', in which we view a human life from its beginning onwards, there is not also a place for those which bring under the magnifying-glass, not a single individual, but the manifold forms of a whole epoch? In such a case, can a multiplicity not become a unity? The greater dramatic interest will, I concede, always remain with stories 'with one hero'; but the multiple novel [*Vielheitsroman*], with all its latitude and delayings, with its mass of portraits and episodes, will be able to stand beside the unitary novel [*Einheitsroman*] as an equal—not in its effect but in its art—provided it does not proceed arbitrarily but introduces only those retardations which, while they seem for the moment to have forgotten the goal and purpose of the work, are actually furthering it. Not you, but others have told me the novel is weak in its construction; I believe quite sincerely that, on the contrary, it is in this direction that its strength lies.

Any suspicion that this miniature manifesto was in reality conceived after the deed it purports to explain had already been done is dispelled when we consider what a *Vielheitsroman* would look like in any concrete case and then examine Fontane's practice in the novels he wrote after *Before the Storm*. The chief respect in which a *Vielheitsroman* would differ from an *Einheitsroman* would clearly lie in the region of everything we

summarize in the word 'plot': a novel 'with *one* hero' would naturally tend to be a novel with one 'plot' centred on the 'hero' and, since the hero would, if he was to remain the hero, have to be present on the page for the greater part of the novel, the greater part of the novel would tend to be in some sense concerned with the plot; a novel which sought to 'bring the manifold forms of a whole epoch under the magnifying-glass', on the other hand, would possess either a very large number of plots evolving side by side or a single but very attenuated plot which would often be lost sight of (in an extreme case it would have no plot at all). Now, since Fontane devised the term *Vielheitsroman* for the purpose of characterizing *Before the Storm*, we shall not be precisely surprised to discover that it is one: it does possess a plot, and the kind of plot we would expect to find in a 'historical novel', but its plot is stretched out into an exceedingly thin line which is for long periods all but obliterated by attendant—'superfluous'—material possessing only an indirect, sometimes very indirect, bearing on it; the word 'superfluous' belongs, however, within ironical quotation-marks because this material would be truly superfluous only if the novel were a failed *Einheitsroman*. That this is not the case seems to be proved by an examination of Fontane's subsequent novels. At the opposite end of the scale so far as size is concerned stands his fifth novel, *Schach von Wuthenow*, which compares with *Before the Storm* as Mercury does with Jupiter; yet, despite the vast difference in scale, and also despite the fact that the later novel, unlike the earlier, does have a single central figure or 'hero', the general structure or form is the same in both: in *Schach von Wuthenow*, too, the plot, in itself the briefest of anecdotes, is for three-quarters of the novel all but overwhelmed by 'superfluous' matter and comes through to determine the course of the narrative only in the final quarter. Its diminutive scale notwithstanding, *Schach von Wuthenow* too is a *Vielheitsroman*.

*Schach* is also a historical novel, but the tendency to suppress plot in favour of a wide-angled view of a whole society is not limited to this particular *genre*. Fontane published four novels having at their centre the theme of adultery and set in the then contemporary world (mostly Berlin): his third novel,



*L'Adultera*, his eighth, *Cécile*, his twelfth, *Unwiederbringlich*, and his fourteenth, *Effi Briest*; they all possess far less plot than *Madame Bovary*, which was on its appearance regarded as having diminished the element of connected story to an irreducible minimum (a view held perhaps by Flaubert himself), and contain many pages whose relevance to the main theme is tangential—*Cécile* is especially remarkable for the paucity of its action and the apparent 'superfluity' of most of its contents. The sixteenth and last completed novel, *Der Stechlin*, finally—nineteen years after *Before the Storm*—has in the accepted sense of the word no plot at all, unless the fact that the lord of the manor, Dubslav von Stechlin, is growing old and his son, Waldemar, is growing up is to be considered a plot.

What all this goes to show is that the form of Fontane's first novel was the outcome not of a blunder on the part of a writer venturing into a new medium, but of a basic disposition in him. For it is clear from his practice that, of the great realist novelists of the nineteenth century, Fontane is the one most embarrassed by the necessity of articulating a novel by means of a chronological plot; the construction of an original story the telling of which is to be the ostensible purpose of the narrative was not merely something for which he had little liking, it was also something that worked directly against his actual artistic purpose in composing a novel, which had to do with the reproduction, and thus preservation, of the life and real presence of a particular society in a particular epoch—for it hardly needs to be said that 'real life' is not composed of plots, or that the element of plot is the most artificial element in the nineteenth-century realist novel. Thus, while *Before the Storm* tells a story, the purpose of the novel is achieved within the interstices of the story; the immense space between the threat of a popular uprising and its execution is filled not with superfluous matter or padding, but for the most part with the novel itself.

To read *Before the Storm* with understanding requires, therefore, only that we do not confuse *plot* with *theme*. When, in her chapter on *Bleak House* in *Dickens the Novelist* (1970), Q. D. Leavis says of its plot that it is 'not altogether identical with the theme though not, as in *Oliver Twist*, *Nicholas Nickleby* and *The*

*Old Curiosity Shop*, simply irrelevant to it and a nuisance', she brings out clearly the distinction between plot and theme in the case of the novelist cited by Fontane himself as being in an important respect his opposite, at any rate as regards the structure of *Before the Storm*. Dickens's plots are, of course, at the other end of the spectrum from Fontane's; but once we distinguish plot from theme, the two novelists are seen to be as similarly inclined with respect to quantity of thematic content as they are different from one another with respect to quantity of plot.

Fontane took a very long time to complete his first novel. There are indications that he already had it in mind as early as 1854—the year of Alexis's *Isegrim*—and a firm idea as to what it was to be like may well have come to him during the second half of 1860, when he was writing the *Wanderungen* chapters on Schloss Gusow and Schloss Friedersdorf, for the former is the Schloss Guse of the novel and the latter the residence of the Marwitz family (see notes to pp. 123 and 23). He began serious work on the novel in the winter of 1863–4, and on 14 November 1865 signed a contract for its publication. It was then called *Lewin von Vitzewitz*. Work was now interrupted by Fontane's war reporting, and a long period elapsed before it was resumed: the fact is evident from the quite marked improvement in narrative style from Book II onwards as compared with the more immature manner of the first book. When at long last he resolved to complete it he worked reasonably fast: between the late autumn of 1876 and September 1877 he continued it to the end of Book III, and Book IV followed between October 1877 and April 1878, by which time the earlier chapters were already appearing in *Daheim*. The complete novel was published in two volumes in October and November: Fontane oversaw the proofs, and the text of this first edition is thus regarded as authoritative.

The somewhat cool critical reception it initially received, the main thrust of which was, as already indicated, that it exhibited '*Kompositionslosigkeit*'—that it lacked structure—has given way in the present century to a willingness to see it as belonging to the same *genre* as Tostoy's *War and Peace*: not, that is to say, as

an overlong and too slackly constructed 'historical novel', but as a novel depicting a whole society at a particularly 'historic' moment of the past.

With the plot of *Before the Storm*, which concerns the inter-linked histories of two families, the von Vitzewitzes of Hohen-Vietz and the von Ladalinskis of Berlin, the reader will experience no difficulty; with its theme, however, which is the coming into being of modern Germany, some assistance may perhaps be welcome. The problem to be faced is that of the very large number of historical and other references contained in the novel, some knowledge of which is both assumed in the reader and necessary for a full understanding of its theme. There are many scores of different names—of people high and low, of cities, towns and villages, of provinces and counties, of streets and squares, of palaces, churches, inns and restaurants, of regiments and battles, of forests and rivers, of nations and races, of plays, books and paintings—in *Before the Storm*; I have included some of them in the annotations at the end of the book, but not all: in general I have offered a note only when knowledge of some particular fact or detail seemed to me relevant to a full understanding of the novel. With a very few exceptions, most of which are noted, all the names are of real people, places and things; some of the chief characters derive some of their characteristics from people who lived in the period in which the novel is set, though in no case is there anything approaching an exact correspondence; and the course of events in the public sphere is approximately historical. Because of the importance of warfare in the novel's scheme I have taken care to date all the battles mentioned and to indicate very briefly who fought them; and I have also annotated other more remote historical events referred to. But there are, in addition, a number of recurring or background themes which I feel the reader could usefully have in the front rather than at the back of the book, so that their significance will already be clear when they are encountered. There are six general topics that fall under this head.

1. *The colonization of the March.* The term 'March' (German *Mark*) is synonymous with the term 'the province of

Brandenburg', which came into existence as the march or borderland of the medieval German empire. The course of German colonization of the territory is indicated by the regional names Altmark (west and east of the Elbe), Mittelmark (between the Elbe and the Oder) and Neumark (east of the Oder). This process of conquest and colonization began in earnest in 1134 under the leadership of Albrecht I, called the Bear; Albrecht's heirs bore the name Ascanians, and they died out in Brandenburg in 1319. The conquests of Albrecht the Bear had, however, been preceded in the tenth century by an unsuccessful attempt to colonize the March which had been defeated by its inhabitants, a nation of Slavic tribes called by the Germans 'the Wends': at first overborne and reduced to a colonial population, the Wends organized a mighty uprising in 983, destroyed the German civilization that had been erected on top of them and drove what remained of the Germans back across the Elbe. After this rout, German colonization of the March did not resume until the twelfth century. Reference to the Wends is frequent in *Before the Storm*, often to assert the Wendishness of many things mistakenly thought to be German; in particular, however, they are the basis of the theme of Pastor Seidentopf's obsession. In Seidentopf, the pastor of Hohen-Vietz, the awakening of national feeling that is the underlying theme of the whole novel has assumed the form of a historical delusion: the theory that the Wends whom the Germans encountered when they invaded the March had themselves invaded it at a much earlier period and displaced a German civilization already in existence there, that of the 'Semnones'; from which supposed fact it would follow that when Brandenburg was taken from the Slavs this was no more than the restitution to the Germans of land originally theirs. This thesis could be established only through archaeology, and Seidentopf has thus become obsessed with the need to discover archaeological evidence of the pre-Wendish existence of a Semnonian civilization in the March. As the Semnones were, in historical fact, no more than a backward Germanic tribe which lingered on after the Wends had moved into the region in about 500 and established in it the first advanced form of civilization it had ever seen, Seidentopf's cranky researches are

a rich source of comedy. (A community of 'Wends' still exists as a distinct entity in East Germany, where they are known as Sorbs.)

2. *The reign of Friedrich the Great.* Friedrich II, called the Great and, more familiarly, 'Old Fritz', was King of Prussia from 1740 to 1786. References to his reign permeate *Before the Storm*: in recollection it appears as the 'great age' of Prussian history and, as such, the antithesis to the age of defeat and national humiliation in which everyone is now living. Friedrich himself is evoked dozens of times as a model king and by implication (once directly) contrasted with Napoleon. Of his many battles two are of particular significance: Kunersdorf (12 August 1759), in which he sustained a defeat at the hands of the Russians and Austrians from which it seemed he could not possibly recover (thus a parallel with the Battle of Jena), and Torgau (3 November 1760), in which he won a victory over the Austrians after supposedly having rallied the wavering Prussian grenadiers with the most celebrated of the many remarks attributed to him: 'You rascals, do you want to live for ever, then?' Of his works of peace the one most relevant to the novel, and the one most often recalled, is the draining of the Oderbruch. Sometimes called simply 'the Bruch', the Oderbruch is the fenland and marsh area to both sides of the Oder where it passes through Brandenburg; during the period of reconstruction that followed the Seven Years War (1756-63) large areas of the Bruch were drained and made suitable for agriculture. It was an improvement which led to a considerable influx of 'foreigners', such as the inn-keeping family the Scharwenkas, who cultivated the former fenlands, previously ownerless, and enriched themselves in doing so. The immigration was so considerable that by 1786 the number of new settlers had more or less compensated for the losses of the war (usually put at 300,000). Hohen-Vietz is in the Oderbruch, as are Hohen-Ziesar and Schloss Guse. The owner of this last, Aunt Amelie, is representative of another side of the reign of Friedrich the Great of relevance to the novel: its overestimation of French culture to the detriment of German. This effect proceeded from Friedrich himself, to whom the language, literature and life of France were superior in almost every way

to those of Prussia, and whose court at Potsdam evolved accordingly. The influence it exercised involved two distinct elements: on the one hand, it encouraged an appreciation of that in which France at that time clearly was superior to Prussia and an ability to profit from it without the intrusion of 'nationalist' feelings of resentment; on the other, however, it led to an unintelligent overvaluation of all things French merely because they were French. It is this latter element that is most strongly marked in Aunt Amelie. We learn immediately on being introduced to her that, although her native language is German, she is ignorant of Klopstock's *Messias* though she has passages of Voltaire's *Henriade* by heart. Later she is shown preferring Lemierre's dramatization of the life of William Tell to Schiller's, and this for a performance before a German audience at the end of 1812. In both cases the worse is elevated above the better for no other reason than that it is French. Above all, she is quite unable to enter into, or even understand, the mood of patriotic revival that is beginning to animate the country, since she is quite unable to feel anti-French. This bias has been powerfully reinforced by her years of residence at Rheinsberg, the court of Friedrich's disaffected younger brother, Prince Heinrich of Prussia (1726-1802), where French was spoken habitually (Heinrich himself is always represented as speaking it). A direct link with the Friedrichian age is provided in the figure of Friedrich's youngest brother, Prince Ferdinand (1730-1813), of whom Fontane paints a very sympathetic portrait (Book III, Chapter 1).

3. *The Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars.* Of the incidents of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars that occurred before the novel opens and are referred to in it the following are of special thematic significance. At the *Peace of Basel* (5 April 1795), concluded between Prussia and France, Prussia agreed to desert the anti-French coalition. In the same year Prussia participated with Russia in the so-called *Third Partition of Poland* which temporarily erased Poland from the map; Warsaw became a Prussian city and the population of Prussia was increased to 7.5 million by the addition of 3.5 million Poles. These two actions, both of which proved to have been exceedingly ill-judged, are part of the background of the disapproval

of Prussian behaviour voiced by some of the leading characters of the novel. The *double battle of Jena and Auerstädt* (14 October 1806) ended in the total defeat of the combined forces of Prussia and Saxony by the French under Napoleon; the defeat was succeeded by headlong flight, armies and fortresses surrendered without resistance, and Berlin was evacuated by the government and left undefended; Napoleon rode into it unimpeded on 27 October: recollection of these events is part of the common consciousness of the whole population of *Before the Storm* and they are repeatedly recalled; to some they constitute a punishment for the policies pursued from 1795 onwards. The *retreat from Moscow* in the autumn of 1812 is the event from which the action of the novel takes its start: it began with the conflagration of Moscow, ignited by the Russians themselves on 14 to 16 September, which deprived Napoleon of any means of sustaining himself in the heart of Russia, and by Christmas the remnants of the Grande Armée were approaching Brandenburg (how far they are away is a subject of much confident but ill-informed debate); the 29th communiqué that is the cause of so much agitation is the bulletin from Napoleon's headquarters, dated 3 December 1812 and published in Paris on the 16th, which more or less admits the failure of the Russian campaign.

4. *Three acts of rebellion.* The failure of the *coup* of 20 July 1944 is ultimately attributable to the extreme difficulty experienced by members of the German officer corps in acting against their commander-in-chief, even if he is Adolf Hitler: rebellion is something against which their instincts rebel and for which they have no training or aptitude. When Berndt von Vitzewitz, a major in the Prussian Army, none the less resolves to lead a popular rebellion against the French without the sanction of the government—an act which, as he freely admits, could be construed as high treason—his resolution is in need of support. It is provided by three acts of rebellion against the constituted authority in Prussia—two in the immediate past, one during the course of the novel—that are alluded to with a *leitmotiv*-like brevity that makes it certain Fontane expected his reader to grasp their significance without the need for explanation. The earliest is that associated with the name *Schill*. Ferdinand von

Schill (1776-1809), a major in the Prussian Army, was so incensed by the policy pursued by the government following the defeat at Jena in October 1806, and by the humiliations heaped upon the head of Prussia at the Peace of Tilsit in June 1807, that later during the latter year he formed an irregular cavalry unit of his own with the intention of continuing the war against Napoleon on a freelance basis. In May 1809, in what became a celebrated gesture of rebellion, he led this force, numbering about a hundred men, directly from the parade-ground at Berlin northwards towards Mecklenburg with the stated objective of joining the English army installed there; on the 31st he arrived in the Baltic port of Stralsund, where he was encountered by Dutch and Danish troops and fell fighting in the streets. This action at once made of Schill a national hero—as witness the presence of his portrait at the inn at Hohen-Vietz—but also gave actuality to the question whether behaviour of this kind was or was not under all circumstances reprehensible. The second act of rebellion was the *resignation of the three hundred officers*: a famous act of independence and insubordination on the part of members of the Prussian officer corps. It occurred in March 1812 as a protest against the agreement signed with Napoleon under which Prussia was to furnish 20,000 troops—about half the number it was allowed to possess under the terms of the Peace of Tilsit—to Napoleon's projected campaign against Russia. Other provisions of the agreement included the restoration in Prussia of full French military occupation (designed, of course, to protect the rear of the Grande Armée, but felt as a new and gratuitous humiliation). Clausewitz, Boyen and Gneisenau were among those who resigned; Scharnhorst wanted to retire from service and, when refused permission to do so, relinquished the post of chief of the general staff. Altogether about a quarter of the officer corps was involved in the mutiny; and many compounded their offence by enlisting in the Russian service and taking to the field in defence of Russia—an act which, since the invading army included 20,000 Prussians, could be looked upon as waging a species of civil war. The third act of rebellion is that summarized in the novel by Ladalinski's announcement '*York has capitulated.*' Ludwig Count York von Wartenburg



(1759-1830), a field marshal in the Prussian Army, was in command of the Prussian auxiliary force furnished to Napoleon's Russian campaign; in December 1812 this force was engaged in covering the retreat out of Russia of the northern French army corps under Macdonald when, without having been ordered to do so and without warning anyone first, he withdrew it from the war and, at a convention signed with the Russians at Tauroggen on 30 December, declared the troops serving under him to be neutral. This was the most signal act of insubordination in Prussian history and, in the context of the moment, next door to a *coup d'état*, inasmuch as it virtually compelled the government in Berlin to take the logical next step and declare war on France (which it did on 16 March 1813).

5. *The Proclamation*. From the way in which it is discussed in the novel, the 'Proclamation' on which so many hopes are pinned must surely be the King's address headed 'To my People' ('*An mein Volk*'), the first official appeal to popular patriotism in the history of Prussia; if so, however, it has been displaced chronologically, for when it is promulgated we are still at the beginning of February 1813 and the 'Proclamation' was not issued until 17 March, the day after Prussia had declared war on France. There was a series of earlier proclamations, beginning on 3 February, but these were of far more limited import and do not seem to be what the characters in *Before the Storm* have been reading and listening to; certainly the address '*An mein Volk*' is what Fontane's first readers would have understood by 'the Proclamation'.

6. *Berlin*. At the beginning of the nineteenth century it possessed a population of about 170,000. The kingdom of Prussia came into existence in 1701, and Berlin, the capital of Brandenburg, became the capital of the new kingdom in 1709. The somewhat austere but on the whole clean and spacious appearance it presented at the date of *Before the Storm* was acquired largely during the reign of the second Prussian king, the years 1713 to 1740. The third king, Friedrich the Great, had the medieval walls removed, though the gates remained. Expansion failed to follow, however, and the villages around the city, now merely the names of suburbs, remained intact;