Frederick William III's Call for National Mobilization, "To My People" (March 17, 1813)

**by Candace Thomas, Oct. 2015**

**Character**

* “shy and reserved boy”, “He was a melancholy boy, but he grew up [pious](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pious) and honest”
* Historians consider him a subpar if not somewhat incompetent monarch. He was not able to operate his court, as he would have liked, as he did not possess the expertise for doing so.
* He appears to have a very defeatist character and therefore the vigor expressed in the source seems at odds with the author’s nature. As if he is saying what he things will get him the best conscription results as opposed to saying what he truly believes.
* Deeply feared Jacobinism and was reluctance to join war against Napoleon. This further shows his mediocrity as a leader, and highlights the extent to which he is unlike his predecessors.

**Context**

* He favored a policy of neutrality during the Napoleonic Wars, however, became involved by 1806. His army suffered a defeat at Jena and he and his family fled to Memel in East Prussia
* Prussia had lost all of its territories west of the Elbe and its larger neighbours posed a considerable threat to its security.
* He had accepted his fallen status and needed persuading by reforming ministers (Heinrich Friedrich Karl Reichsfreiherrvom und zum Stein, 25 October 1757 – 29 June 1831, commonly known as **Baron vom Stein**, **Gerhard Johann David Waitz von Scharnhorst** 12 November 1755 – 28 June 1813, **Karl August Fürst von Hardenberg May** 31, 1750 – November 26, 1822).
* He agreed to join the alliance (known as the German Campaign), despite having reservations about the types of liberal reform’s the ministers desired. These reforms implemented since 1806, meant that Prussia possessed a modernized government and an increasingly effective officer corps.
* He, himself, wanted a to return to the autocratic nature of his previous reign. Therefore, it could be assumed that he gave this speech unwillingly.

**Volunteer Statistics** **(look at Schulze reading pg. 53)**

* Data obtained by volunteer records
* The massive majority of them were educated, middle-class, civil service workers, or artisans. A relatively small portion of peasants volunteered
  + The educated class were overrepresented by a factor of six
* Surprisingly, there was an incredibly large number of artisans
  + Even though artisans only represented 7% of the population, the volunteer army was composed of 41% artisans
* The peasants either didn’t have the nationalistic fervour or they simply didn’t receive the call to arms
  + Peasants composed of 75% of the population
  + Yet they only composed 18% of the volunteer army

**Publication Data**

* Originally published on March 20, 1813 in the newspaper Schlesische privilegirte Zeitung, a Silesian newspaper-- it wasn’t done in Berlin
* Published as a flyer as well
* It was distributed at all of the royal post offices
* The Schlesische privilegirte Zeitung was newspaper associated with the monarchy, likely had a large following-- this document was written for mass consumption, not just for intellectual elites. However, whether or not the peasant class would have been able to access this article (or interpret its content) is questionable.
* Re-published several times since 1906, mainly in the form of document readers and commentary on historical documents.

**Impact and Legacy of the Source**

* Extremely popular German source, shows up in vast variety of texts
* It was often reused as a nationalistic text. The term “my people” or “mein volk” was little used before this article and often used by leaders who followed.
* Re-used as example of the German people unifying to overthrow an oppressor or enemy.

(Professor will talk about the Nazi propaganda source)