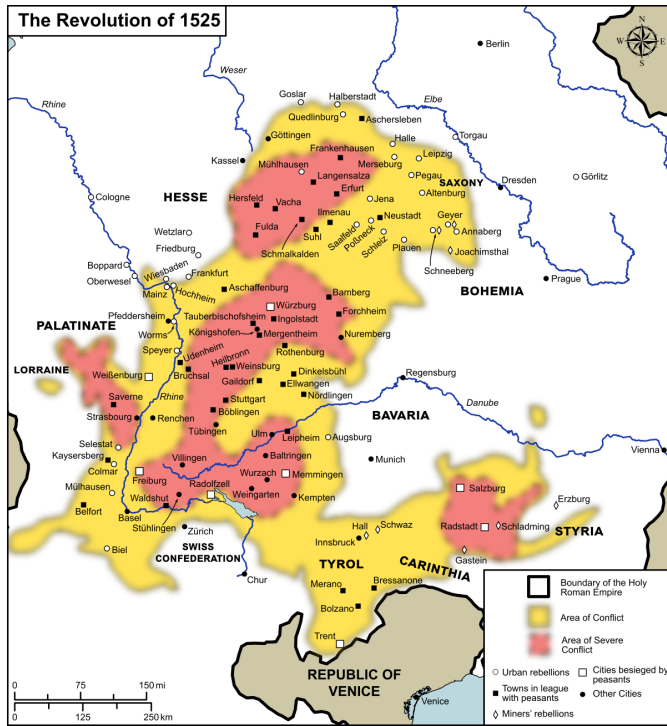


The Revolution of 1525

Abstract

The Revolution of 1525 is another name for the German Peasants' War, the largest insurrection in European history before the French Revolution. It began in the Black Forest in late summer and fall of 1524, reached its peak around Easter of 1525, and produced its last risings (notably in Tyrol) in 1526. The revolution's ultimate causes reach far back to the later Middle Ages to the great agrarian depression that weakened the lords' and strengthened the peasants' power over local life. The widespread movement for village self-government (communalism) was a hallmark of rural life in the Holy Roman Empire, especially in its central and southern regions. Where the movement for local self-government had already largely fulfilled its aims, as in Switzerland, the peasants did not revolt in 1524-26. Some other southern areas remained quiet as well, notably the very strongly ruled duchy of Bavaria. The Lower Rhineland (i.e. the area along the Rhine north of Cologne) and the north German lands also remained undisturbed. Otherwise, the movement engulfed the Empire's southern and central tiers, spilling over language barriers into French-speaking Lorraine and Italian-speaking South Tyrol. In general, the zones of stronger local government and weaker noble power (shown in darker orange) formed the chief centers of the revolution, but many adjoining territories (shown in lighter orange) also became involved as well. In some regions, especially in Saxony and Tyrol, miners revolted and joined the movement, and so did burghers in many of the small towns. The rebels typically agitated for the redress of grievances and for political reform, largely in the direction of stronger territorial government. In the course of the war, inexperienced rebel troops faced off against princely armies strengthened by professionals and supported by strong cavalry and artillery; the rebel armies lost all but one of the pitched battles in which they engaged. The outcome of the revolution varied greatly from region to region: in some areas, the rebels suffered severe repression and their grievances went unredressed; in other areas, their grievances were redressed and their burdens were ameliorated. Psychologically, the revolution was a major event in the early Protestant Reformation: it strengthened the convictions of some that religious abuses formed the main reasons for rebellion; it bolstered the arguments of others that the new doctrines had caused the revolution.

Source



Source: Source: Peter Blickle, *The Revolution of 1525*, translated by Thomas A. Brady, Jr., and H.C. Erik Midelfort. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981, Map 1. Original digital cartography by Cherie Norton/Mapping Solutions, 2009. Revised cartography (WCAG-compliant) by Gabriel Moss, 2022.

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