

## Adolf-Heinrich Count von Arnim

(1803 – 1868)

Prussian Governmental Administrator, Politician, Lord of the Earldom Boitzenburg

Adolf-Heinrich was born as the second son of Friedrich Abraham Wilhelm and Georgine, born Countess of Wallmoden-Gimborn, on April 10<sup>th</sup>, 1803. The marriage of his parents got divorced already in 1808 and his father died at the age of only 45 years in 1812. After that, the boy's education and the decision on his education and his professional career lay in the hands of his grandmother Freda Antoinette and his guardian Baron vom Stein. Another guardian, who had been determined by his father, was the "Kriegsrat" (German for "councillor of war") Bandelow who was, above all, responsible for the economic matters of the family's estate, Boitzenburg.

Adolf-Heinrich attended the Werder'sche Gymnasium (GB: grammar school, USA: high school) and went on to study jurisprudence in Göttingen and Berlin. His outstanding talent for political analysis was appreciated by the famous political scientist privy councillor Prof. D. Eiselen who praised him as his most distinguished student at that time. Von Arnim took all three required examinations (USA: finals) while the third and concluding one he passed only in 1830 after he had taken over his possessions in 1827.



Adolf-Heinrich Count von Arnim

Baron vom Stein who was extremely solicitous and took great care of Adolf-Heinrich's education stood in close contact with Adolf-Heinrich and his grandmother through letters. This correspondence between Stein and Adolf-Heinrich displays the often praised moral and statesman-like attitude of this great reformer who had significant influence on the development of his ward's personality, and subsequently Adolf-Heinrich von Arnim's career as a Prussian statesman. The inheritance of Boitzenburg, according to his father's will, was assigned to him by drawing lots in 1820. His older brother Friedrich Ludwig inherited the estates Zichow and Kleinow and received a significant compensation in cash.



Adolf-Heinrich Count von Arnim and his wife, Caroline née Countess von der Schulenburg

In 1830 Adolf-Heinrich married Anna Caroline Countess von der Schulenburg from the House of Wolfsburg (born November 17<sup>th</sup>, 1804). The marriage lasting 37 years was blessed with ten children, of whom only four sons and four daughters survived unfortunately.

Those eight children nevertheless resulted in a rather large family with numerous descendants.<sup>1</sup> Anna Caroline was, incidentally, also a “Dame of the Order of Louise” (“Dame des Luisen-Ordens”, a Prussian order for ladies that was founded by Friedrich Wilhelm III in remembrance of his wife Luise for services of Prussian ladies during times of war). Named after her was the park and beech wood forest ‘Carolinenhain’ to the south and the west of the castle. At its eastern entrance is standing a huge field-stone with a cast-iron nameplate that has survived the time of Communist destruction after 1945. Anna Caroline, who survived her husband by eighteen years, died in Berlin on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1886.



Signet ring of the Chief Administrator of the District of Templin, with engravings of the incumbents

Adolf-Heinrich began his service to the state in 1830 as head of the administration of his native region Templin. Early on in a letter from March 9<sup>th</sup> 1830, Stein had greatly recommended to Adolf-Heinrich to accept this post. At the same time Stein pointed out to him that he should also pursue the post of chief administrator of a “Regierungsbezirk” (= regional council). In Stein’s eyes, the difficult conditions in the Rhine province and later perhaps a position in Posen were interesting areas for Adolf-Heinrich to look at.

In 1833, thirty years young, von Arnim became vice-administrator of the “Regierungsbezirk” (regional council) of Stralsund, being promoted to chief administrator of the regional council of Aachen in 1834 and of Merseburg in 1838.

During his time spent in the Rhine region and especially during the emerging crisis between the Roman Catholic Church and the state, von Arnim’s moderate attitude and the conciliatory dignity of his character worked beneficially towards conciliation.

During, his days of service in Aachen, the young Otto von Bismarck worked as a trainee at his office. In 1838 von Arnim became curator of the “Ritterakademie” (Academy of the Knights) in Brandenburg.

Adolf-Heinrich progressed quickly in his career when he, at the age of 37, was appointed as “Oberpräsident” of the province of Posen in 1840. He stood for a policy that seemed suitable to reconcile the Polish with the Prussian state. He had significant experience with Prussian bureaucracy without ever having become a bureaucrat himself. He could probably be described more as an independent aristocrat who supported the idea of a society based on moderate principles of a social class order. His overall moderate approach towards ruling his constituencies earned Adolf-Heinrich a lot of credit in the beginning. However, the Polish had higher hopes and their pursuit for freedom went much further. Unfortunately, their desire for independence went beyond what a Prussian statesman could grant at that time, thus Adolf-Heinrich’s moderate policy of conciliation failed in the province of Posen. However, especially this struggle and Adolf-Heinrich’s considerate response to those heated and passionate Polish nationalists underlined his remarkable talent as a statesman and led to his appointment as Minister of the Interior (GB: Home Secretary, USA: Minister of the Interior) by King Friedrich Wilhelm IV in 1842.

At the age of 39 years, Adolf-Heinrich had become the youngest Minister of the Interior that Prussia ever had. One can say that his work as Interior Minister was strongly determined by his childhood and adolescent experiences. Above all, formative years were those during the enormous radical change after the subjugation of Prussia by Napoleon and those years the country was under strong influence of the French Revolution of 1789. Courageous men like his guardian Stein and his father’s friend Gneisenau, but also Scharnhorst and the Chancellor Lord Hardenberg, had given the country new life through their thorough reforms of the state and the army.

Now Adolf-Heinrich himself stood at the centre of power. One of his first and most important steps was the drafting of a constitution that had been promised to the people in 1815 and was long overdue.

While both King Friedrich Wilhelm IV and his new Minister of the Interior were regarded as anglophile, neither of the two considered a constitutional monarchy following the British example as a possibility. Whereas the King found the idea of a constitution unpleasant anyhow, Adolf-Heinrich had in mind a constitutional system based on the principles of social class order. The indistinct and hesitant behaviour of the King concerning this question finally led to Adolf-Heinrich handing in his resignation in 1845, which was granted. Discord about the King's romantic idea of a constitution was widespread. His repeated promise of a constitution that he understood to be based on social class principles, while the public wished for a constitutional and parliamentary constitution respectively, increased the political pressure.

At that time, the relationship between the Royals and the House of Boitzenburg was despite differences of opinion on the constitutional question largely unspoilt. The King and his Princes went hunting at Boitzenburg on December 16<sup>th</sup>, 1845, as had been recorded in the guest book which unfortunately got lost. Yet Adolf-Heinrich continuously rejected posts offered to him, such as for instance the post of a legate in Vienna or as Prussian minister of finance. When in 1848 the revolution erupted in Prussia, too, King Friedrich Wilhelm IV appointed Adolf-Heinrich as Prussian Prime Minister on March 18<sup>th</sup>, 1848, as he knew Adolf-Heinrich as a man of great diplomatic talent. Adolf-Heinrich requested more time to think about it than understandable under such explosive circumstances, but accepted the post after all on March 19<sup>th</sup>, 1848.

First of all, that the revolutionary situation in Prussia calmed down soon is probably owing to the then Lord Mayor Krausnitz together with the Chief of Police von Minutoli. Besides, the Commander-in-Chief General von Prittwitz contributed to the calming down of the situation through his careful commands in response to the initial street fighting. In a similar way, Adolf-Heinrich pursued a policy of calming down the uprising.

Adolf-Heinrich played a decisively important part in the proclamation of a new constitution for a constitutional monarchy. On March 18<sup>th</sup>, 1848 the King had initially promised a constitutional monarchy but phrased its conditions in rather general terms only which stirred further distrust in the monarch. This was overcome by publishing binding promises as of March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1848, which basically meant an official and more detailed announcement of a new constitution as worked out by the ministry under the leadership of Adolf-Heinrich after March 19<sup>th</sup>, 1848. Von Arnim took full responsibility for this in a written document of December 1848.

Over the course of days after this announcement it became clear that there was not sufficient agreement between Adolf-Heinrich and King Friedrich Wilhelm IV on fundamental questions of Prussian interior policy and all-German affairs respectively. Therefore von Arnim again took the step of early resignation, this time resigning from his post as Prussian Prime Minister, on March 29<sup>th</sup>, 1848. Adolf-Heinrich continued to be a member of the National Assembly in Frankfurt but only for a short time. Besides holding various honorary posts he later became a member of the Prussian state parliament based on the constitution of 1850. Finally, he became a member of the Prussian Upper Chamber in which the Arnims of Boitzenburg had a hereditary seat.

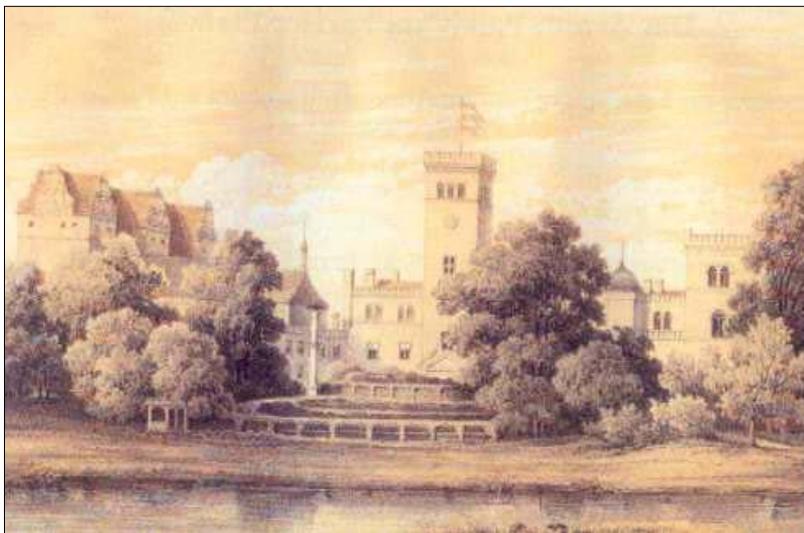
In all parliamentary institutions of which he was a member, Adolf-Heinrich stood out as a brilliant orator. He was often compared to famous British parliamentary orators who like him had not only their listeners be carried away by a splendid rhetoric but also tried to convince them by the logic of their line of reasoning. Also his outer appearance was said to resemble those of British statesmen.

In the same way as Adolf-Heinrich had distinguished himself as a competent statesman and politician he had also established himself successfully as an entrepreneur on his possession in Boitzenburg. The "Edict concerning the regulation of the affairs of squires and peasants" (= "Edict die Regulierung der gutsherrlichen und bäuerlichen Verhältnisse betreffend") from September 14<sup>th</sup>, 1811 – one of the most

important pieces of reform by Stein and Hardenberg – initiated the liberation of the peasants. However, it is worth noting that on the estate Boitzenburg the majority of peasants and rural inhabitants were free from the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards already. One proof of that is thought to be the fact that the ‘Gesindezwangdienst’ – the duty of ‘unfree’ peasants to work for the squires for a certain amount of time and unpaid – does not get mentioned in any historic sources or scientific documents about Boitzenburg. However, the country-wide reform was delayed over many years and as late as 1837 Adolf-Heinrich was appointed “General commissioner for the regulation of the affairs of squires and peasants in the Kurmark (=”General Commissarius für die Regulierung der gutsherrlichen und bäuerlichen Verhältnisse in der Kurmark”).

The change in property and land ownership across the country and the reasonably good market conditions for agricultural products as a result of the recovery from the Napoleonic Wars and the post-crisis rise in demand for agricultural products around 1820 caused Adolf-Heinrich to further invest into agriculture.

In the course of handing back land to the peasants which affected around 10% of the Boitzenburg estate, three smaller farming estates (Lichtenhain, Lindensee and Sternthal) with together about 900



Chateau Boitzenburg middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century

hectares had been set up by Adolf-Heinrich’s guardian Bandelow between the years 1823 and 1826. Adolf-Heinrich himself had three further smaller farming estates set up (Arnimshain, Mellenau and Steinrode) between 1837 and 1855 with again 900 hectares. These smaller estates set up in the second round by von Arnim resulted mainly from clearing wood and thus making the good soil of the Krewitzer Heide and its enclosure accessible for agriculture.

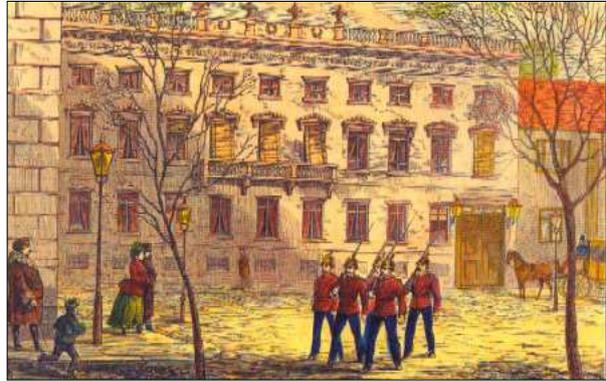
Not only the clearing of the oak and beech forest and the subsequent development of land for farming required large amounts of money but also the development of the infrastructure. To this belonged working quarters, workers’ housing estates, schoolrooms as well as path construction and establishing connections to the country roads. Over time, further estates were purchased and added to the Boitzenburg holding and resulted in a large farming estate which Adolf-Heinrich declared to be almost 15,000 hectares in total. Most of the individual estates and smaller farm holdings were rented out separately.

Agricultural activities on that land by the von Arnim Family themselves gradually developed only with the employment of administrators in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. An exception was the area of forestry with its long economic management cycles which required a continuous management by the von Arnims themselves supported by forestry experts.

Regarding the management of the Boitzenburg property, Adolf-Heinrich’s experience gained during his long career in the civil service was certainly of benefit to him and the estate. Nevertheless, he is said to have had an entrepreneurial approach when managing the farm which may perhaps be best compared with a management activity in today’s industry and trade – and his enthusiasm for economical planning most probably arose from the new entrepreneurial spirit at the dawn of the age of industrialization.

Beyond this increasing activity in agriculture and forestry Adolf-Heinrich made further investments in buildings that, above all, served his desire for representation according to his high rank in the state. Of those amendments, the generous rebuilding of the so-called lower basement of the Boitzenburg castle is to be mentioned. Von Arnim commissioned the well-known architect Stüler, a student of Schinkel, to raise this part of the castle by one storey and to redecorate it in the then much favoured Tudor style. The work began in 1838 and was completed by October 1842.

Further property acquisitions by Adolf-Heinrich meant the purchase of House No. 4 at the Pariser Platz in Berlin in 1855 which was later renamed into Arnim Palace. In 1857/58, von Arnim had the architect Eduard Knoblauch rebuild it and add another storey to it. The family moved into the palace in October 1858.



The Arnim Palace at No 4 Pariser Platz in Berlin. Today the Hotel Adlon occupies the site

The large financial compensation his brother Friedrich Ludwig received according to their father's will as well as the aforementioned property investments by Adolf-Heinrich makes one come to the conclusion that von Arnim was a man of great wealth. Indeed, his annual income was enormous at that time. In the year 1865 and a few years before his death in his accounting report he estimated his annual income from his land and capital property to be 86,000 Taler.

Already by 1826, Adolf-Heinrich had become the canon (= Domherr: canon / capitular) of Brandenburg, therefore a regular income (paid by the state to canons who were administrators of finances and looked after the legal affairs, in German called the "Präbende") poured into his coffers, adding up to for instance 3,000 Talers in the year 1864. His income as a civil servant during his service as minister of the interior of Prussia may have amounted to about 10,000 Taler. Adolf-Heinrich emphasized in the above mentioned personal accounting report that especially in the 1830ies and 1840ies an unusually high income had been generated from forestry.

In evidence of his entrepreneurial success Adolf-Heinrich pointed out with great satisfaction that between the years 1833 to 1865 his wealth increased by 1,500,000 Talers which is an astonishingly high amount for the times he lived in. Such favourable personal economic circumstances obliged Adolf-Heinrich to promote cultural institutions and the science. Remembering the words of his guardian Stein and in continuation of the tradition of his ancestors, von Arnim focused his efforts and donations on all issues of church, educational and social matters. Many of the church, school and social care facilities in the region until 1933 and beyond go back to Adolf-Heinrich's and his wife's initiatives. One should also mention the refurbishment of the Boitzenburg Park – built by his grandfather according to plans by Peter Joseph Lenne – which Adolf-Heinrich carried out soon after he had inherited Boitzenburg.

His outlook and vision caused Adolf-Heinrich to think about the legal status that his extensive agricultural and forestry business was to be given. He decided to establish an entailed estate (a property ownership facility of German origin, called "Fideikommiß": the family wealth, usually landed property, remained in the hands of one family member, while the owner had only the proceeds of his property at his disposal and was not allowed to sell or give the property away). These entailed estate ownership rights had been re-introduced on June 5<sup>th</sup>, 1852, after they were temporarily forbidden on basis of the German Charter of fundamental rights of 1848 and the Prussian constitution of 1850.

With great support for this property bill by King Friedrich Wilhelm IV, these particular ownership rights for Boitzenburg had been put on firm ground again after their introduction through Adolf-Heinrich 1833, i.e. just after he had overtaken the management of Boitzenburg. As of February 9<sup>th</sup>, 1855 a new legal property ownership document was drawn up which was confirmed by King Friedrich Wilhelm IV on August 18<sup>th</sup>, 1856. The king also took the step to raise Boitzenburg to an earldom.

On January 8<sup>th</sup> 1868, Adolf-Heinrich died in Boitzenburg in the presence of his spouse and most of his children. He had lived to see the birth of Dietlof, his eldest grandchild and later owner of Boitzenburg (22/8/1867). Right to the end of his life, Adolf-Heinrich had carried out his various political functions dutifully. His fundamental beliefs consisted of great loyalty towards the institutions of the monarchy but at the same time the conviction that the monarch needed a corrective in form of a parliamentary institution. However, for Adolf-Heinrich it was imperative to preserve a strong monarchy.

Despite their often disagreements on political issues, a good personal relationship remained between Adolf-Heinrich and both kings Friedrich Wilhelm III and Friedrich Wilhelm IV. Taking this favourable relationship with both Prussian Kings into account it is considered rather tragic that Adolf-Heinrich's connection with the Prince of Prussia and later German Emperor, the subsequent third king Wilhelm I whom he served, never developed to a similar degree. Members of the new government in the so called 'new era' following Friedrich Wilhelm IV have supposedly worked against Adolf-Heinrich von Arnim. Opposition against von Arnim might have been caused by those forces objecting him being again appointed as prime minister. Conservatives both in the state parliament and the upper chamber were split. For many of them he was considered too liberal whereas for the Liberals he was too conservative. At the coronation of Wilhelm I in 1861 the estrangement of the two became obvious. A result of this rupture was that Adolf-Heinrich was withheld the honour of being awarded the "Medal of the order of the black eagle" ("Schwarze-Adler-Orden") that he certainly deserved.

Today, an obelisk in the pheasantry on the Boitzenburg estate reminds of Adolf-Heinrich, which can be seen across the kitchen pond from the western front windows of the castle. The half-relief of his head, fixed to the obelisk – presumably a work by Schadow –, as well as the inscriptions were forcefully removed by the Communists at the end of World War II and destroyed like so many other cultural assets. Also in Boitzenburg's church there is a marble half-relief which reminds of this admired patron, located above the door to the sacristy.

<sup>1</sup> Freda Gräfin von der Schulenburg-Tressow, geb. Gräfin von Arnim a.d.H. Muskau: Die Nachkommen des Grafen Adolf-Heinrich von Arnim-Boitzenburg und seiner Gemahlin Karoline, geb. Gräfin von d. Schulenburg a.d. Hause Wolfsburg, Görlitz 1927

1. Compare: Sieghart Graf von Arnim a.d.H. Boitzenburg: „Dietlof Graf von Arnim-Boitzenburg (1867 – 1933) Ein preußischer Landedelmann und seine Welt im Umbruch von Staat und Kirche“, C.A. Starke Verlag, Limburg 1998
2. Compare: Wolf Nitschke „Adolf-Heinrich Graf von Arnim-Boitzenburg (1803 – 1868) Eine politische Biographie“ Duncker und Humblot, Berlin 2004

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