

The Unification of Germany

The Age of Bismarck



German Unification



Opposing Ideas

- ◆ Grossdeutschland
 - A Germany including the Austrian Empire
- ◆ Kleindeutschland
 - A Germany excluding the Austrian Empire

The German Confederation

- ◆ Replaced the Holy Roman Empire
- ◆ Loose political association of German states
 - Most of the power remained in the hands of the individual German sovereigns
 - No central executive or judiciary
 - Diet met in Frankfurt to consider joint legislation

Revolutions of 1848

- ◆ Nationalism reaches ascendancy
- ◆ German revolutions result in Frankfurt Parliament
 - Call for unified Germany
 - Austria said it would oppose a centralized government in Germany
 - Prussian king offered the crown of the unified German Empire

Proposed German Unification

- ◆ Proposed country was one in which the parliament would have considerable power
 - With limitation of the royal prerogative, Frederick William IV of Prussia turns down the offer of the throne
 - ◆ Was opposed to any limitations on royal power
- ◆ Frankfurt Parliament disbands

Frederick William IV



Results of Revolutions

- ◆ A reactionary return
 - Those who defied royal power were punished
 - Many reforms granted due to revolutionary violence were abrogated

Moves to a Royalist Directed Unification

◆ Prussian Union

- Weak willed attempt by Prussia to have Germany unify around the Prussian monarch
- Attempt started while Austria still was preoccupied with issue of Hungarian separatism
- Prussian advantage not pressed

Moves to a Royalist Directed Unification

- ◆ After solution to Hungarian Question
 - Austria opposes Prussian Union with support for a re-established German Confederation
 - Russia supports moves of Austria
 - Prussia blinks
 - ◆ Prussian union dissolved and German Confederation fully re-established
- ◆ Most smaller German states supported Austria in this situation

Signs of Things to Come

- ◆ 1859
 - France and Piedmont defeat Austria in the Northern Italian War
- ◆ Maintenance of authoritarian regime in Vienna relied upon respect for military prowess
 - Shaken by defeat
 - Popular unrest grows throughout the empire
- ◆ To hold back unrest Franz Josef agrees to a constitution that establishes a parliament

Franz Josef of Austria



Signs of Things to Come

- ◆ Frederick William IV of Prussia suffers a breakdown
- ◆ Brother, William takes the regency
 - Announces reform
 - Government turns away from reactionary politics

William I



Realpolitik in Prussia

- ◆ Change in attitude of liberals
 - Came to feel that their defeat ten years before was due to idealism and exuberance
 - Fatal mistake was assumption that enthusiasm and selflessness could be translated into power and substituted for statesmanship

Realpolitik in Prussia

- ◆ Theory and rhetoric would not work
- ◆ Negotiation and compromise would lead to unity and freedom
- ◆ Hoped that giving the king sufficient time, he would lead them to where they wanted to be
 - Parliamentary government
 - Liberty

Conflict

- ◆ Progressive Party founded
 - Pushed for increased liberalization of the government
- ◆ King thought he was being pushed too far
 - Became more adamant and uncompromising
- ◆ King and Progressive Party waited for an issue to fight over

Army Reforms

- ◆ King wanted to increase the number of regular army regiments and decrease the militia
 - Parliament demanded a modification of the plan
 - ◆ Did not want an increase in the power of the conservative officer corps
 - King refused
 - ◆ Believed that parliament was trying to gain control of the royal army

Otto von Bismarck



Otto von Bismarck

- ◆ King appoints Bismarck as Prime Minister of Prussia
 - Arch-conservative
- ◆ Parliament refused to approve budget until their army reforms were approved by the king
 - Bismarck and government continues to collect taxes and fund the army as before

Otto von Bismarck

- ◆ Sought a government that would be parliamentary but at the same time allow authoritarian policies
- ◆ Solution of crisis
 - Liberals wanted German unity and freedom
 - Bismarck would use the prospect of unity to tamper the drive for freedom

Otto von Bismarck

- ◆ Compromise
 - Bourgeoisie would obtain the benefits of economic consolidation
 - King retained the advantages of political domination
- ◆ Saw answer to internal issues in foreign policy

Gross oder Klein

- ◆ With the debate over a large or small Germany continuing Bismarck saw that the Austrian question had to be answered
 - He had to find a way to get Austria out of any possible solution to German unification

General European Situation

- ◆ Russian defeat in Crimean War keeps them out of continental politics
- ◆ Britain concerned about internal reform
- ◆ Napoleon III hopes that an internal German Civil War might let him expand the French Empire across the Rhine

1864 – War with Denmark

- ◆ Danish king rules over Schleswig and Holstein as a duke
 - These provinces were ethnically German
- ◆ Denmark annexes Schleswig into the country
 - Nationalist sentiment in Germany was outraged
 - William I proposes joint action to Franz Josef

1864 – War with Denmark

- ◆ After a short war Denmark is defeated
 - Schleswig and Holstein are jointly supervised by Prussia and Austria
- ◆ Austria wanted them to become an independent country in the German Confederation
- ◆ Prussia sought outright annexation

Schleswig-Holstein Compromise

- ◆ 1865 Compromise
 - Holstein
 - ◆ Governed by Austria
 - Schleswig
 - ◆ Governed by Prussia
 - Joint sovereignty reaffirmed
- ◆ Tension between Austria and Prussia continued to grow

Steps to War

- ◆ Prussia sought and gained an alliance with the newly formed state of Italy
- ◆ Austria sought and gained French neutrality
- ◆ Austria sought aid from the minor states of Germany
 - Most smaller German states allied with Austria
 - ◆ Saw Austria as a protector against Prussian expansion

Austro-Prussian War

- ◆ 1866
- ◆ The Seven Weeks War
- ◆ Austrian Army destroyed at the Battle of Königgrätz
 - Prussian needle gun
- ◆ Destroyed the balance of power achieved at the Congress of Vienna, 50 years before

Treaty of Prague

- ◆ Austria retains all possessions except Venetia
 - Promised to Italians by Prussians before the war
- ◆ Franz Josef forced to agree to Prussian land gains
- ◆ Bismarck did not want to destroy Austria

Treaty of Prague

- ◆ Prussia gains
 - Hanover
 - Nassau
 - Hesse-Kassel
 - Schleswig-Holstein
 - Frankfurt am Main
- ◆ German Confederation dissolved
- ◆ Northern German Confederation established

Prussian Internal Politics

- ◆ Bismarck's military triumph led to a constitutional triumph
- ◆ Bismarck did not seek to destroy liberalism but to come to an accommodation with it
- ◆ Triumph of nationalism led to the subjugation of liberalism

North German Confederation

◆ Federal Constitution

– Did not have

- ◆ Bill of Rights
- ◆ Ministerial Responsibility
- ◆ Civilian supervision of the army

– Did have

- ◆ Uniformity of currency, weights, measures, commercial practices
- ◆ Industrial laws
- ◆ Financial regulations

North German Confederation

- ◆ Federal constitution
 - Created economic unity the middle class had been looking for
 - ◆ Helped reconcile the middle class to the defeat of its hopes for greater political freedom

Conflict with France

- ◆ A powerful new nation now existed in Central Europe
- ◆ France had hoped for a war between Austria and Prussia
 - Napoleon III had hoped that they would each emerge from the conflict exhausted
 - Then France could expand to the east

Conflict with France

- ◆ France now faced a strong German state
- ◆ France wanted compensation in the Rhineland, Luxembourg, or Belgium
- ◆ Berlin kept this from happening
- ◆ It became obvious to all that France and Prussia were on the road to war

Conflict with France

- ◆ Bismarck was willing to accept the coming war
 - Wanted to bring the southern German states into the Prussian fold
 - Knew that it would take a common patriotic struggle against foreign aggression

Prelude to War

- ◆ Prince Leopold, a relative of the Prussian king, was invited to take the Spanish throne
 - He accepted
- ◆ Paris demands that he be ordered to withdraw his acceptance
 - His father renounces his acceptance for him
- ◆ Paris demands that William I forever renounce any attempt to put a Hohenzollern on the throne of Spain

Prelude to War

- ◆ French demand presented to the king at Ems
 - William I refused to promise, but conference ended in a friendly fashion
 - Bismarck doctored the report of the conference to make it sound like the king refused to see the ambassador again
 - French used this as an excuse to declare war

Franco-Prussian War

- ◆ All German states joined in a war against France
- ◆ Overwhelming German victory
- ◆ Results of War
 - French Empire collapses
 - ◆ Third Republic declared
 - France loses Alsace-Lorraine
 - France pays Germany 5,000,000,000 francs
 - France accspts an army of occupation

The German Empire

- ◆ January 18, 1871
 - William I proclaimed Emperor of the Germans at Versailles

Proclamation of the German Empire

