

## German Unification

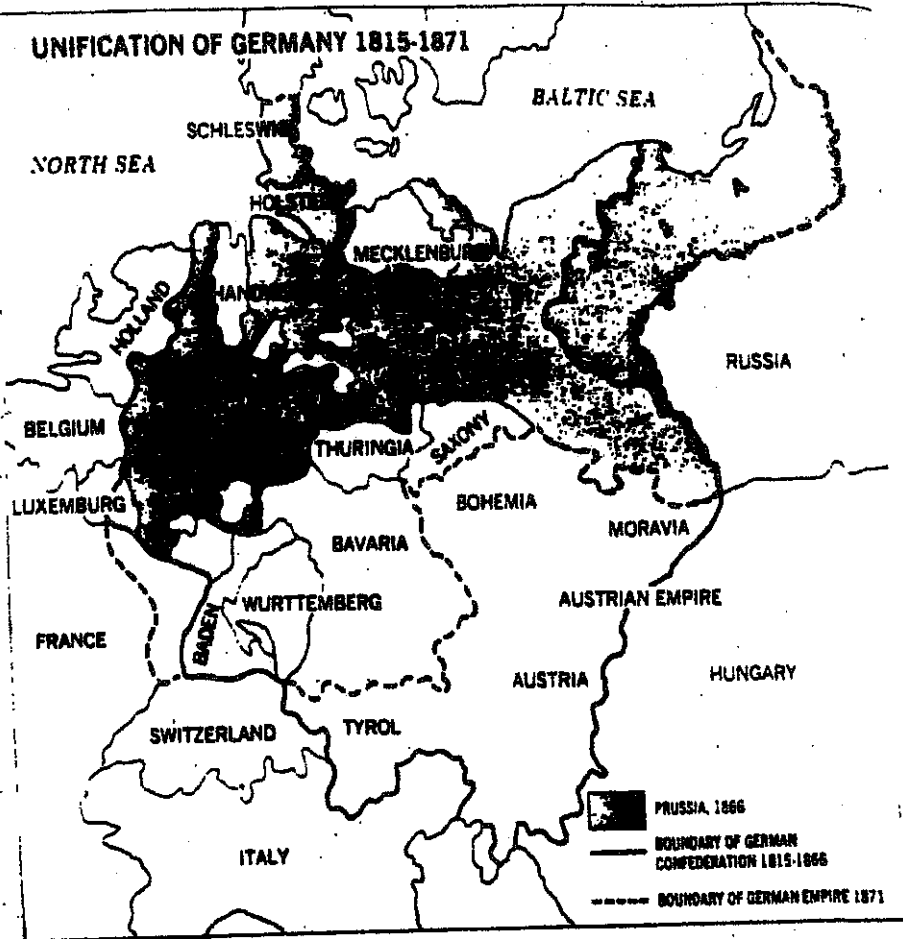
Although the German revolution of 1848 and the Frankfurt Assembly had failed to achieve their purpose, the nationalist movement in Germany was far from dead. German writers, such as the historian Heinrich von Treitschke, wrote about the union of all Germans under Prussian leadership. The *Zollverein*, a customs union created by Prussia, had established free trade among the various states. By 1842 most of the German states had joined the union. This union not only showed that closer economic cooperation was good business for the member states, but it also strengthened the position of the middle-class leaders of the German nationalist movement. By increasing the economic ties between the German states, the *Zollverein* made political unity easier under Prussia. Austria never joined the *Zollverein*, so Prussian leadership opportunities increased.

The chief architect of German unification was Otto von Bismarck, a typical conservative, landholding, aristocratic Junker. He was an enemy of all liberal ideas and a fanatical supporter of the Prussian state and its king. He entered politics in 1847 and served as minister to Russia and France, gaining much valuable experience in diplomacy.

Bismarck became convinced that the German people could be united only through strong, national pride and the use of military power. According to Bismarck, power was the means to the end—unity.

In 1862 he was appointed chancellor of Prussia because of a crisis that had developed between the king and the Prussian legislature. The king wanted to raise taxes to strengthen the army but the legislature refused to approve. Bismarck advised the king to collect the taxes without parliamentary approval. This was done and for four years Bismarck ruled Prussia after dissolving the Parliament. He prepared to build a powerful, united Germany by relying on force. He declared, "Germany does not look to Prussia's liberalism but to her power. . . . The great questions of the day are not to be decided by speeches and majority resolutions—therein lay the weakness of 1848 and 1849—but by blood and iron!" And he carried this out in a carefully prepared program of war.

## UNIFICATION OF GERMANY 1815-1871



The first war was against Denmark (1864) over Schleswig-Holstein. In this war he was joined by Austria, the two victors sharing the spoils. Friction with Austria over administration of the conquered Danish territories provoked war against Austria in 1866. Bismarck first isolated Austria by an alliance with Italy by which it would get Venetia. French neutrality was assured by vague promises of territorial compensation. The Austrian armies were defeated in seven weeks, and Austria was eliminated from German affairs. Austria recognized the dissolution of the German Confederation, and the creation of the North German Confederation under Prussian leadership. The Catholic South German states, fearful of Prussian control, refused to join the new state.

The next step was to involve France in war so that all Germans could share a common patriotism and their fear of Prussian domination could be lessened. Bismarck deliberately provoked the

war in 1870 by publishing a cleverly edited dispatch sent to him by the Prussian king. The dispatch was about a French demand that no member of the Prussian royal family would be nominated to fill the vacancy on the Spanish throne. This "Ems Dispatch" gave the impression that the French ambassador had insulted the Prussian king and, in return, had been insulted by the king. Both the French and the Germans were furious, and the French declared war.

The South German states were shown correspondence from Napoleon III in which he sought compensation for his neutrality in the Austro-Prussian War, and they hastened to join Prussia against the French. The superb Prussian army defeated the French and forced Napoleon III to abdicate. The French continued the struggle, and the city of Paris was besieged for four months before it yielded. At Versailles, in the famous Hall of Mirrors, the German Empire came into existence in January, 1871, and William of Prussia became Emperor William I.

Militarism plus nationalism succeeded over liberal and democratic movements in Germany, and *Realpolitik* offered a new basis for international relations.

## GERMAN UNIFICATION

1. How did the *Zollverein* influence German unification?
2. Identify THREE facts about Otto von Bismarck.
3. How did Bismarck think the German people would attain unification?
4. What did Bismarck mean in his quote, "Germany does not look to Prussia's liberalism but to her power....The great questions of the day are not to be decided by speeches and majority resolution—therein lay the weakness of 1848 and 1849—but by blood and iron." (Highlight the quote in your reading.)
5. What countries did Bismarck go to war against in his goal of German unification?
6. What was the fate of Napoleon III after the Franco-Prussian war of 1870?
7. What do you think the psychological impact of the French was of Bismarck ending the Franco-Prussian War in the Hall of Mirrors at the Palace of Versailles?