V

GERMANY

(1848–1871)

Rivalry of Prussia and Austria. — Of the thirty-eight sovereignties which composed the German Confederation, Austria and Prussia were by far the most important. Both were disliked by the other German states, but Austria, although the larger and stronger, was dreaded less than Prussia. During the preceding 150 years they had gradually approached each other by an inverse process, the one by intermittent development and expansion, the other by intermittent decline, until they stood almost upon a par. Liberty had nothing to hope from the government of either. Nor could it be expected that either would advance the cause of German union except by making other and weaker states dependent upon itself. Prussia, because of her more restricted territory and smaller population, caused less anxiety to Europe than did Austria, who, because an agglomeration of races, never could rally the Germans to the cry of nationality.

The problem what to do with Austria had disturbed the wordy National Assembly at Frankfort in 1848 and 1849. Some of the delegates proposed that she should remain a state apart, either abandoning her German provinces or retaining them, but in any case to be reckoned outside of Germany. Other delegates proposed that all the German states and all the Austrian provinces of whatever race should combine in one enormous empire, spanning Europe from the Baltic to the Adriatic, and that Austria should be its head. The first of these propositions may be called the Prussian, and the second proposition the Austrian plan. This crucial question received its solution only eighteen years afterwards, and meanwhile affected the whole current of German politics.

Question of Schleswig-Holstein (1848–1855). — Schleswig and Holstein are two duchies lying between Denmark and Germany. The inhabitants of the former were mainly, and of the latter exclusively, German. Both enjoyed a separate political existence, with their own customs and laws, although their sovereign was the king of Denmark. Frederick VII at his accession incorporated Schleswig with his Danish states. But the German Diet as formally incorporated Schleswig with Germany and appointed Prussia by the sword to carry this action into effect. The Danes gained the advantage in battle. A protocol, signed at London in 1850 by Great Britain, France, Austria, Russia, Sweden and Denmark, and another treaty in 1852, introduced diplomatic arrangements which decided little, contented no one, but contained the germ of future trouble.

The king went on with his attempted Danification of the duchies. In 1855 he published a constitution wherein the same laws were applied indiscriminately to them and to all his other provinces. The duchies protested, Germany threatened to interfere, and Frederick granted certain concessions. The general irritation did not diminish. Relying on the promise of Great Britain to protect the integrity of Danish territory and swept along by the enthusiasm of the Danes, the king persisted in measures that were both impolitic and unjust. In 1863 by a manifesto he assimilated Schleswig to his other possessions and declared that Holstein should pay certain taxes, which had not been voted by her Estates. After fruitless negotiations the German Diet determined on armed intervention and occupied Holstein by Saxon and Hanoverian troops (December, 1863). The Danish forces withdrew without resistance into Schleswig. Thus far the contention had been one of race. The Danes had determined to blot out the German character of the duchies, which the inhabitants of those duchies were as determined to retain.

King William I and Otto von Bismarck. — On January 2, 1861, William I ascended the Prussian throne. His brother, Frederick William IV, suffering from insanity, he had acted as regent during the preceding two years. He was a man of strong character and decided opinions, fully persuaded of the divine right of kings. His despotic sentiments often brought him into collision with the people, and he was by no means popular. A soldier from his birth, he believed the welfare of Prussia was bound up in the army.

Though otherwise evincing no extraordinary talents, he showed remarkable sagacity in the choice of men for important positions. Then he honored them with his full confidence, and, absolute as he was, allowed them wide latitude in carrying out his ideas. In the autumn after his accession he appointed Otto von Bismarck Minister of Foreign Affairs and President of the Cabinet. No other choice could have been equally felicitous. If the renown of the minister afterwards overshadowed that of the master, it was largely gained by the fidelity as well as the wonderful ability of his services. From 1862 to 1870 the biography of Bismarck is the history of Prussia; from 1870 to 1890 his biography is the history of Germany. In an epoch-making age he stands without a peer among the statesmen of continental Europe.

A conflict was pending in 1862 between the king and the Prussian parliament over the bill reorganizing the army. The scheme proposed more than doubled the numbers of its troops while vastly increasing their efficiency. But the people saw in the project only an additional weapon of despotism. The lower Chamber loaded the bill with amendments and finally rejected it altogether. Bismarck had no respect for popular votes or parliamentary majorities. Already he had declared that the great questions of the time were to be settled "by blood and iron." He advised the king to prorogue the Chambers, silence the press, and reorganize the army as he pleased. His advice was followed.

The military system of Prussia, which was to defeat Austria, crush France and reunite Germany, was the result. But it was founded none the less on a royal usurpation of legislative rights.

Austro-Prussian Occupation of Schleswig-Holstein (1863–1864). — The troubles in the duchies afforded Bismarck an admirable opportunity. First he strenuously persuaded Austria to join Prussia and interfere, regardless of the Diet and of the wishes of the other German states. After sending an ultimatum to Copenhagen, which was rejected, the Prussian and Austrian forces invaded Denmark, not as the armed agents of Germany or in behalf of the duchies, but solely on their own account. The little nation was helpless against their attack. Neither did she receive the promised aid of Great Britain. By the treaty of

Vienna (October 30, 1864) Christian IX was obliged to cede all the disputed territory to Prussia and Austria jointly. The odium of the conquest fell equally on the two Powers, but the gains were to be reaped only by Prussia. By the convention of Gastein — one of the most brilliant diplomatic triumphs Bismarck ever won — to her was assigned Schleswig with the seaport of Kiel in Holstein. Austria was to retain Holstein, a distant acquisition, which could only be to her a source of weakness and a cause of future trouble.

Seven Weeks' War between Prussia and Austria (1866). — Prussia was at last ready for the final struggle against her adversary. Her army was fully disciplined and equipped. Great Britain, France and Russia endeavored to mediate and prevent the war, but to no purpose. Most of the German states sided with Austria. On June 15 Prussia declared war against Hanover, Hesse and Saxony. On the 20th Italy, whose offensive and defensive alliance had been gained by the promise of Venetia, declared war against Austria and Bavaria. Meanwhile Prussia had 500,000 men under arms. She struck with astounding rapidity, but Austria and her allies moved as in sleep or stupor. Within a week Hanover, Hesse and Saxony were subdued, their armies captured or destroyed and their kings in flight. Into Bohemia, whose passes were undefended, poured 280,000 men with 800 guns. Marshal Benedek had no more than 210,000 men and 762 guns of inferior calibre with which to oppose them. In two days' time he lost a sixth of his army and sent word to the Austrian emperor that his only hope was in peace. The reply was an order to give battle, and the order was obeyed.

Sadowa (July 3, 1866). — Benedek chose a strong position at Sadowa in an amphitheatre of wooded hills in front of Königgrätz, the Elbe being in his rear. With the precision of a machine his foes in three several armies under King William, Count von Moltke, the Minister of War, the Crown Prince, General von Roon, General Hiller, Prince Frederick Charles and other of the ablest commanders in Europe were marching upon him. Even Bismarck was there to rejoice in the ruin for which he had prepared the way and to conduct the negotiations after the already certain victory.

The Prussians began their attack at three o'clock in the

morning. The Crown Prince of Prussia with his army was to reach his position on the extreme Austrian right ten hours later. The Austrians held their ground with unflinching courage, but mere gallantry is a minor element in modern warfare. Even the fog fought for the Prussians and masked the movements of the Crown Prince until his army assailed and destroyed the Austrian right. Driven from their lines by the always mounting tide of the attack, the soldiers of Benedek at last gave way and in one enormous broken mass rushed toward the river. That day's fighting cost Austria 4190 killed, 11,900 wounded, 20,000 prisoners and 160 cannon. Above all, it hurled her out of Germany and crowned Prussia, her hereditary foe, with the leadership over the Germans.

It is common to ascribe the victory at Sadowa to the Prussian needle-gun, which, though carrying a shorter distance, could be fired five times as fast as the Austrian cannon and with far deadlier effect. The superiority of this weapon however was but one among the many factors that ensured Prussian success.

The road to Vienna was open. There was no army to oppose the advance of the invaders. After ineffectual attempts at negotiation, Austria implored the mediation of Napoleon to secure peace, thereby abandoning her as yet unconquered and unattacked allies, Bavaria, Baden, Würtemberg, Hesse and other south German states. They were subdued with celerity.

Meanwhile, Austrian dynastic pride was soothed by the victory of the Archduke Albert over the Italians at Custozza (June 24), an ill-omened field for Italy, and by the destruction of the Italian navy at Lissa (July 20) by Admiral Tegetthoff.

Hegemony of Prussia (1866–1871). — The conditions of peace were, as always, hard for the vanquished. Austria recognized her exclusion from Germany, abandoned her claims to Schleswig and Holstein, ceded Venetia to Italy, agreed to pay an indemnity of 20,000,000 thalers, and left Prussia free to organize Germany as she pleased.

Prussia added to her territory Hanover, despite the protests of Great Britain, the electorate of Hesse, Nassau, the free city of Frankfort, Schleswig-Holstein and certain smaller territories to facilitate her internal communications. Upon the states of southern Germany, Bavaria, Würtemberg and Baden, she imposed treaties of offensive and defensive alliance, and was also guaranteed the command of their armies in case of war. These treaties however were to be kept profoundly secret.

The most manifest and imposing monument of Sadowa was the North German Confederation, of which the king of Prussia was president. It comprised Prussia and in general all the states north of the river Main. Though a federal parliament, the Reichstag, was created, each state retained its own chambers and local laws. A federal council, wherein out of forty-three votes Prussia had seventeen, regulated federal relations. Even the reluctant southern kingdoms were shrewdly interested in the new order, being requested to send delegates who, together with the members of the Reichstag, should decide the customs-dues and the tariff regulations of all Germany. The North German Confederation was the sure prophesy of the speedy German unification under a German Empire.

The colors of Prussia were black and white. The new national standard in its union of black, white and red proclaimed her hegemony.

Unification of Germany (1871). — It is a truism, but none the less true, that it was the Prussian schoolmaster who gained the battle of Sadowa. Success intensified rather than relaxed the efforts and ambitions of the mighty men who controlled the destinies of Prussia. Every energy was devoted to preparation for the next war, which, whoever the aggressor, all Europe foresaw would be with France. The Prussian generals, diplomats and statesmen formed a galaxy, rare in any age, and above them towered the king, Von Bismarck and Von Moltke. "Let us work fast, gentlemen," said Bismarck. "Let us put Germany in the saddle. She will know how to ride." In 1868 Von Moltke laid before the king his plan of campaign in case of the invasion of France.

In a mad hour like an angry child France drew the sword. The Franco-Prussian War of 1870–1871, with the dethronement of the Napoleonic dynasty, the captivity of 400,000 French soldiers, and the humiliations of Sedan and Metz, was the result. To Prussia and to Germany it wrought realization of the enthusiastic dreams of Arndt and of the calmer projects of Frederick the Great, Von Stein and Bismarck in the accomplishment of national unity. The blood,

which all the German states shed together on the fields of France, cemented the bonds of race as nothing else could have done. The factious opposition of feudal traditions and local jealousies could not longer continue. The Reichstag in an address to the king of Prussia, presented on December 18, 1870, employed these words: "The North German parliament, in unison with the princes of Germany, approaches with the prayer that your Majesty will deign to consecrate the work of unification by accepting the imperial crown of Germany. The Teutonic crown on the head of your Majesty will inaugurate for the reëstablished empire of the German nation an era of honor, of peace, of well-being and of liberty secured under the protection of the laws."

The Palace of Versailles is the architectural masterpiece and favorite residence of Louis XIV, the arch-enemy of the Germans. More than half a century ago it was converted into an enormous historical picture-gallery and its walls were covered with countless splendid paintings representing all the French conquests and triumphs during hundreds of years. In the gorgeous throne-room of this palace, hung all around with the royal glories of its founder, the German Empire was proclaimed on January 18, 1871, and the king of Prussia accepted for himself and his descendants the imperial crown. No coronation at Frankfort or Berlin could have been so eloquent and so impressive. The shouts of the victorious assemblage, hailing a resurrected and united Germany, announced a new era, and woke echoes in the neighboring room where Louis XIV had died.

VI

THE THIRD FRENCH REPUBLIC

(1871–1898)

The Commune (March 18–May 28, 1871). — A majority of the members of the National Assembly, though not venturing to overthrow the republic, inclined to a monarchical form of government. Therefore they were regarded with suspicion and even hated by a large section of the Parisian populace. The sufferings of the siege, indignation at the triumphal entry of the Germans and the exasperation of failure had wrought the lower classes to frenzy. It was easy for the so-called Central Committee, representing every radical and anarchistic notion and strong in the support of the dregs of the people, to rouse the mob, unfurl the red flag, seize the city and all the fortifications except Mount Valerian and proclaim the Commune. Some of the still armed national guard rallied to their side. Eager for blood, they assassinated General Lecomte and General Thomas, who had fought well for France. M. Thiers, the government officials, and the members of the Assembly had time to withdraw to Versailles.

Marshal MacMahon, now healed from his wounds, and many French prisoners of war had already returned. The marshal had the melancholy duty of placing himself at their head to put down an insurrection of their fellow-countrymen. It was necessary to undertake a regular siege and bombard the capital. Inside the city any semblance of order soon gave way to anarchy, but the insurgents fought with ferocity. They butchered Monseigneur Darboy, — the third archbishop of Paris who has fallen victim during this century to a Parisian mob, — the curate of the Madeleine, and the President of the Court of Appeals. In the quarter of Belleville they slaughtered sixty-two soldiers and priests whom they held as hostages. After the government troops had forced their way through the gates, a murderous hand-