

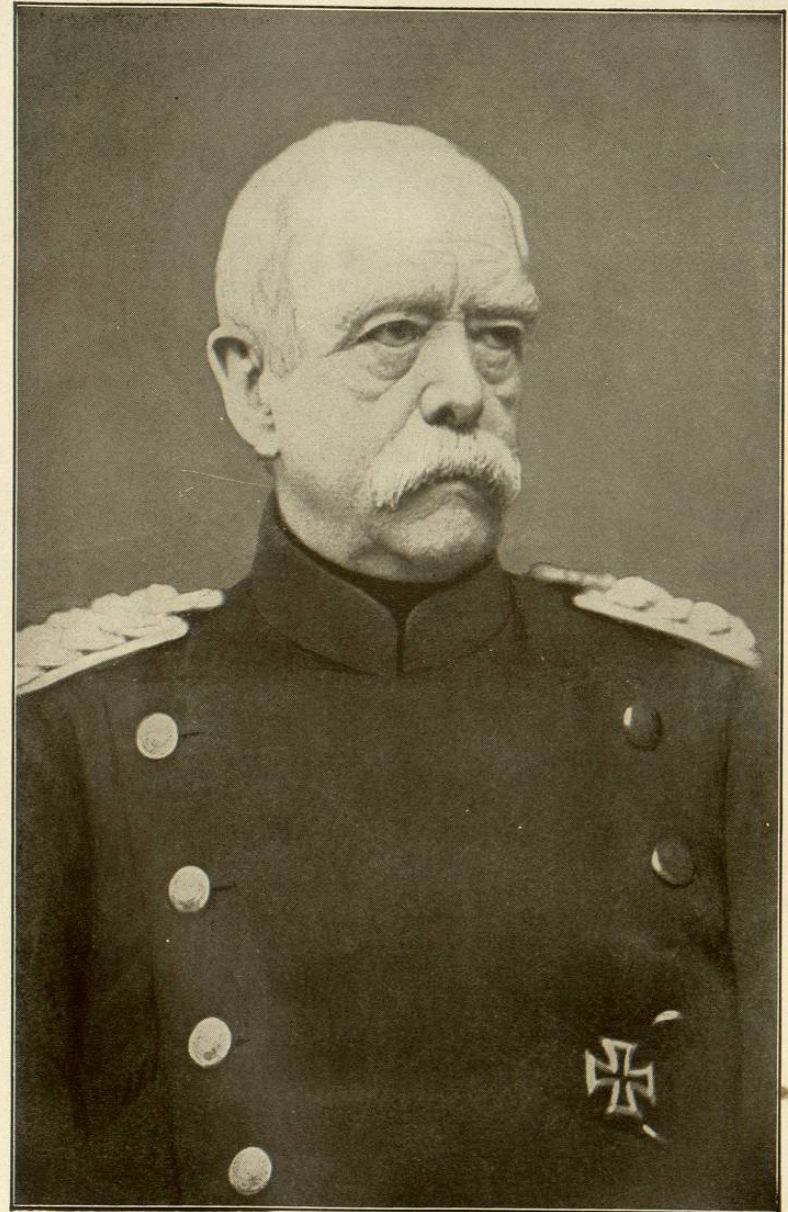
PRINCE BISMARCK

BOTTO EDUARD LEOPOLD, PRINCE VON BISMARCK, eminent Prussian statesman, the creator of German unity, was born at Schönhausen, Prussia, April 1, 1815, and died at Friedrichsruh, July 30, 1898. Of an old and distinguished family, he received his education at Göttingen, Berlin, and Greifswald, and in 1847 entered the field of politics as a member of the first Prussian Parliament, where early in his career he sided with the Conservatives. He was opposed to the assumption of the Imperial crown by the King of Prussia in 1848-49, because the offer of the dignity came from the Frankfort Parliament, and not from the German princes. When he subsequently represented Prussia at Frankfort in the Diet of the German Confederation, he steadily set himself to diminish the preponderant influence of Austria, and to organize a pro-Prussian party among the smaller German States. From 1859 to 1862 he was ambassador at St. Petersburg. Having in the latter year been made Prussian Minister of Foreign Affairs, he governed for four years in defiance of the will of the Prussian Legislature, and risked much in order to bring about the evolution of an army which should secure for Prussia the leadership of Germany. His designs were triumphantly carried out in 1866 in the war with Austria, and in 1870-71, in the war with France, and under King William he continued to govern the Fatherland as Chancellor of the German Empire and prime minister of Prussia until after the accession of the Emperor, William II. The latter, unlike his father and his grandfather, was too autocratic to humor the old national hero, "the man of blood and iron," and so thwarted him in his policy that Bismarck resigned and retired to Friedrichsruh. He died in his eighty-fourth year, a decade after the delivery of his speech on the Army Bill, here reproduced. Though not an orator, his speeches were always strong and impressive.

A PLEA FOR IMPERIAL ARMAMENT

IF I rise to speak to-day it is not to urge on your acceptance the measure the President has mentioned (the army appropriation). I do not feel anxious about its adoption, and I do not believe that I can do anything to increase the majority by which it will be adopted—by which it is all-important at home and abroad that it should be adopted. Gentlemen of all parties have made up their minds how they will vote, and I have the fullest confidence

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in the German Reichstag that it will restore our armament to the height from which we reduced it in the period between 1867 and 1882; and this not with respect to the conditions of the moment, not with regard to the apprehensions which may excite the stock exchanges and the mind of the public; but with a considerate regard for the general condition of Europe. In speaking, I will have more to say of this than of the immediate question.

I do not speak willingly, for under existing conditions a word unfortunately spoken may be ruinous, and the multiplication of words can do little to explain the situation, either to our own people or to foreigners. I speak unwillingly, but I fear that if I kept silent there would be an increase rather than a diminution of the expectations which have attached themselves to this debate, of unrest in the public mind, of the disposition to nervousness at home and abroad. The public might believe the question to be so difficult and critical that a minister for foreign affairs would not dare to touch upon it. I speak, therefore, but I can say truly that I speak with reluctance. I might limit myself to recalling expressions to which I gave utterance from this same place a year and a day ago. Little change has taken place in the situation since then. I chanced to-day on a clipping from the "Liberal Gazette," a paper which I believe stands nearer to my friend, Representative Richter, than it does to me. It pictures one difficult situation to elucidate another, but I can take only general notice of the main points there touched on, with the explanation that if the situation has since altered, it is for the better rather than for the worse.

We had then our chief apprehension because of a war which might come to us from France. Since then, one

peace-loving President has retired from administration in France, and another peace-loving President has succeeded him. It is certainly a favorable symptom that in choosing its new chief executive France has not put its hand into Pandora's box, but that we have assurance of a continuation under President Carnot of the peaceful policy represented by President Grévy. We have, moreover, other changes in the French administration whose peaceful significance is even stronger than that of the change in the presidency—an event which involved other causes. Such members of the ministry as were disposed to subordinate the peace of France and of Europe to their personal interests have been shoved out, and others, of whom we have not this to fear, have taken their places. I think I can state, also—and I do it with pleasure, because I do not wish to excite but to calm the public mind—that our relations with France are more peaceful, much less explosive than a year ago.

The fears which have been excited during the year have been occasioned more by Russia than by France, or I may say that the occasion was rather the exchange of mutual threats, excitement, reproaches, and provocations which have taken place during the summer between the Russian and the French press. But I do not believe that the situation in Russia is materially different now from what it was a year ago. The "Liberal Gazette" has printed in display type what I said then—"Our friendship with Russia sustained no interruption during our war, and it is elevated above all doubt to-day. We expect neither assault nor attack nor unfriendliness from Russia." Perhaps this was printed in large letters to make it easier to attack it. Perhaps also with the hope that I had reached a different

conclusion in the meantime and had become convinced that my confidence in the Russian policy of last year was erroneous. This is not the case. The grounds which gave occasion for it lie partly in the Russian press and partly in the mobilization of Russian troops. I cannot attach decided importance to the attitude of the press. They say that it means more in Russia than it does in France. I am of the contrary opinion. In France the press is a power which influences the conclusions of the administration. It is not such a power in Russia, nor can it be; but in both cases the press is only spots of printer's ink on paper against which we have no war to wage. There can be no ground of provocation for us in it. Behind each article is only one man—the man who has guided the pen to send the article into the world. Even in a Russian paper, we may say in an independent Russian paper, secretly supported by French subsidies, the case is not altered. The pen which has written in such a paper an article hostile to Germany has no one behind it but the man whose hand held the pen, the man who in his cabinet produced the lucubration and the protector which every Russian newspaper is wont to have—that is to say the official more or less important in Russian party politics who gives such a paper his protection. But both of them do not weigh a feather against the authority of his Majesty, the Czar of Russia. . . .

Since the great war of 1870 was concluded, has there been any year, I ask you, without its alarm of war? Just as we were returning, at the beginning of the seventies, they said: When will we have the next war? When will the Revanche be fought? In five years at latest. They said to us then: "The question of whether we will have

war and of the success with which we shall have it (it was a representative of the Centre who upbraided me with it in the Reichstag) depends to-day only on Russia. Russia alone has the decision in her hands."

Perhaps I will return to this question later. In the meantime, I will continue the pictures of these forty years and recall that in 1876 a war-cloud gathered in the South; that in 1877, the Balkan War was only prevented by the Berlin Congress from putting the whole of Europe in a blaze, and that quite suddenly after the Congress a new vision of danger was disclosed to us in the East because Russia was offended by our action at the conference. Perhaps, later on, I will recur to this also if my strength will permit.

Then followed a certain reaction in the intimate relations of the three emperors which allowed us to look for some time into the future with more assurance; yet on the first signs of uncertainty in their relations, or because of the lapsing of the agreements they had made with each other, our public opinion showed the same nervous and, I think, exaggerated excitement with which we had to contend last year—which, at the present time, I hold to be specially uncalled for. But because I think this nervousness uncalled for now, I am far from concluding that we do not need an increase of our war-footing. On the contrary! Therefore, I have unrolled before you this tableau of forty years—perhaps not to your amusement! If not, I beg your pardon, but had I omitted a year from that which you yourselves had experienced with shuddering, the impression might have been lost that the state of anxiety before wars, before continually extending complications, the entanglements of which no one can anticipate

—that this condition is permanent with us; that we must reckon upon it as a permanency; and that independently of the circumstances of the moment, with the self-confidence of a great nation which is strong enough under any circumstances to take its fate into its own hands against any coalition; with the confidence in itself and in God which its own power and the righteousness of its cause, a righteousness which the care of the government will always keep with Germany—that we shall be able to foresee every possibility and, doing so, to look forward to peace.

The long and the short of it is that in these days we must be as strong as we can; and if we will, we can be stronger than any other country of equal resources in the world. I will return to that. And it would be a crime not to use our resources. If we do not need an army prepared for war, we do not need to call for it. It depends merely on the not very important question of the cost—and it is not very important, though I mention it incidentally. I have no mind to go into figures, financial or military, but France during the last few years has spent in improving her forces three thousand millions, while we have spent hardly fifteen hundred millions including that we are now asking for. But I leave the ministers of war and of finance to deal with that. When I say that we must strive continually to be ready for all emergencies, I advance the proposition that, on account of our geographical position, we must make greater efforts than other powers would be obliged to make in view of the same ends. We lie in the middle of Europe. We have at least three fronts on which we can be attacked. France has only an eastern boundary; Russia only its western, exposed to assault. We are, moreover, more exposed than any other

people to the danger of hostile coalition because of our geographical position, and because, perhaps, of the feeble power of cohesion which, until now, the German people has exhibited when compared with others. At any rate, God has placed us in a position where our neighbors will prevent us from falling into a condition of sloth—of wallowing in the mire of mere existence. On one side of us he has set the French, a most warlike and restless nation; and he has allowed to become exaggerated in the Russians fighting tendencies which had not become apparent in them during the earlier part of the century. So we are spurred forward on both sides to endeavors which perhaps we would not make otherwise. The pikes in the European carp-pond will not allow us to become carp, because they make us feel their stings in both our sides. They force us to an effort which, perhaps, we would not make otherwise, and they force us also to a cohesion among ourselves as Germans which is opposed to our innermost nature; otherwise we would prefer to struggle with each other. But when we are enfiladed by the press of France and Russia, it compels us to stand together, and through such compression it will so increase our fitness for cohesion that we may finally come into the same condition of indivisibility which is natural to other people—which thus far we have lacked. We must respond to this dispensation of Providence, however, by making ourselves so strong that the pike can do nothing more than encourage us to exert ourselves. We had, years ago, in the times of the Holy Alliance (I recall an old American song which I learned from my dead friend, Motley:

In good old colonial times
When we lived under a king!)

We had then patriarchal times and with them a multitude of balustrades on which we could support ourselves, and a multitude of dikes to protect us from the wild European floods. That was the German confederation, and the true beginning, and continuance, and conclusion of the German confederation was the Holy Alliance, for whose service it was made. We depended on Russia and Austria, and, above everything, we relied on our own modesty, which did not allow us to speak before the rest of the company had spoken. We have lost all that, and we must help ourselves. The Holy Alliance was shipwrecked in the Crimean War—through no fault of ours! The German confederation has been destroyed by us because our existence under it was neither tolerable for us nor for the German people. Both have ceased to exist. After the dissolution of the German confederation, after the war of 1866, we would have been obliged to reckon on isolation for Prussia or North Germany, had we been obliged to stop at reckoning with the fact that, on no side would they forgive us the new and great successes which we had obtained. Never do other powers look with pleasure on the triumphs of a neighbor.

Our connection with Russia was not disturbed, however, by the events of 1866. In 1866 the memory of the politics of Count von Buol and of Austrian politics during the Crimean War was too fresh in Russia to allow them to think of supporting the Austrian against the Prussian monarchy, or of renewing the campaign which Czar Nicholas had conducted for Austria in 1849. For us, therefore, there remained a natural inclination toward Russia, which, foreseen in the last century, had in this its recognized origin in the politics of Czar Alexander I.

To him Prussia owes thanks indeed. In 1813 he could easily have turned on the Polish frontiers and concluded peace. Later he could have brought about the fall of Prussia. We have then, as a fact, to thank, for the restoration of the old footing, the goodwill of Czar Alexander I.; or, if you are inclined to be sceptical, say to the need felt in Russian politics for Prussia. This feeling of gratitude has controlled the administration of Frederick William the Third.

The balance which Russia had on its account with Prussia was used up through the friendship, I may say through the serviceability of Prussia during the entire reign of Czar Nicholas, and, I may add, settled at Olmutz. At Olmutz, Czar Nicholas did not take the part of Prussia, did not shield us from adverse experience, did not guard us against humiliation; for, on the whole, he leaned toward Austria more than toward Prussia. The idea that during his administration we owed thanks to Russia results from a historical legend. But while Czar Nicholas lived, we, on our side, did not violate the tradition with Russia. During the Crimean War, as I have already told you, we stood by Russia in spite of threats and of some hazard. His Majesty, the late king, had no desire to play a decided part in the war with a strong army, as I think he could easily have done. We had concluded treaties by which we were bound to put a hundred thousand men in the field by a set time. I advised his Majesty that we should put not a hundred thousand but two hundred thousand in the field, and to put them there *à cheval* so that we could use them right and left; so that his Majesty would have been the final arbiter of the fortunes of the Crimean War. But his late Majesty was not inclined to warlike undertakings, and the people

ought to be grateful to him for it. I was younger and less experienced then than I am now. We bore no malice for Olmutz, however, during the Crimean War. We came out of the Crimean War as a friend of Russia, and while I was ambassador to Russia I enjoyed the fruit of this friendship in a very favorable reception at court and in Russian society. Our attitude toward Austria in the Italian War was not to the taste of the Russian cabinet, but it had no unfavorable consequences. Our Austrian War of 1866 was looked upon with a certain satisfaction. No one in Russia then grudged Austria what she got. In the year 1870 we had, in taking our stand and making our defence, the satisfaction of coincidentally rendering a service to our Russian friends in the Black Sea. The opening of the Black Sea by the contracting powers would never have been probable if the Germans had not been victorious in the neighborhood of Paris. Had we been defeated, for example, I think the conclusion of the London agreement would not have been so easily in Russia's favor. So the war of 1870 left no ill humor between us and Russia. . . .

The bill will bring us an increase of troops capable of bearing arms—a possible increase, which, if we do not need it, we need not call out, but can leave the men at home. But we will have it ready for service if we have arms for it. And that is a matter of primary importance. I remember the carbine which was furnished by England to our Landwehr in 1813, and with which I had some practice as a huntsman—that was no weapon for a soldier! We can get arms suddenly for an emergency, but if we have them ready for it, then this bill will count for a strengthening of our peace forces and a reinforcement of the peace league as great as if a fourth great power had