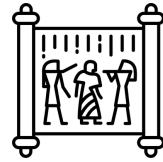




St. Anne's Sixth Form

Get Ahead Tasks

History A Level



One man, three wars and the creation of Germany

1. Summarise the role Bismarck played in the creation and stabilisation of Germany in the 19th century.

**Review by Gerard DeGroot of the book 'Blood and Iron, The Rise and Fall of the German Empire',
By Katja Hoyer**

Germany became a nation — the Second Reich — on Jan. 17, 1871. The ceremony to mark unification took place not in Munich, Frankfurt or Berlin, but at the Palace of Versailles in France. That setting was an indication of the new nation's fragility. Otto von Bismarck, the architect of unification, understood that to hold the ceremony in a German city would foment jealousy among the fractious states that had reluctantly agreed upon unity. Versailles instead symbolized something distinctly German: namely, victory in the war against France.

Bismarck insisted that unity could be forged only in war. A common struggle against an external enemy would turn Bavarians, Saxons and Prussians into Germans. He engineered three unifying wars: first against Denmark in 1864, then against Austria in 1866 and finally against France in 1870. Before those conflicts, "Germany" was a loose collection of 39 states unable to agree on much of anything. Distinctiveness was the stuff of pride. As Katja Hoyer writes in "[Blood and Iron: The Rise and Fall of the German Empire](#)," the new nation was "a mosaic, hastily glued together with the blood of its enemies."

A nation forged in war, however, required perpetual conflict to preserve that tenuous unity. When Germans looked outward they felt genuinely German; when they looked inward, they perceived myriad points of conflict. Ancient chauvinisms were exacerbated by modern incongruities — between rich and poor, Protestant and Catholic, rural and urban, socialist and conservative. For disparate Germans to come together required a common sense of embattlement. "The system fell because it was flawed from the outset," argues Hoyer, "built on foundations of war, not fraternity."

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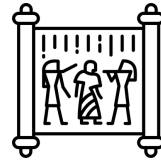
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Get Ahead Tasks

History A Level



One man, three wars and the creation of Germany

Unification was a work of genius that required a genius to make it work. Bismarck was a cacophony of contradictions: an autocrat who fostered democracy, a fierce Prussian who promoted German nationalism, an ultraconservative who courted socialists, a warmonger who mastered diplomacy. His strength lay in his willingness to defy his own political instincts. Under his supposedly conservative guidance, Germany developed the most advanced social welfare system in the world. Contradictions were tolerated in the pragmatic interest of a strong nation. That was the essence of Bismarckian realpolitik.

Bismarck was fortunate to be left alone to craft his vision, free from monarchical meddling. Kaiser Wilhelm I was a die-hard Prussian who despised the notion of German unity. For him, that ceremony at Versailles was “the unhappiest day of my life” because it led to “the burial of the Prussian monarchy.” He was therefore content to let his chancellor shape the new nation in the manner he saw fit.

Bismarck’s autonomy lasted until 1888, when Wilhelm II assumed the throne. In stark contrast to his grandfather, the new kaiser believed fervently in German nationalism and demanded “our place in the sun.” For Bismarck, that promised disaster. Wilhelm, he argued, was a “hothead [who] could not hold his tongue, was susceptible to flatterers, and was capable of plunging Germany into a war without knowing what he was doing.”

Hoyer describes Wilhelm as “whimsical, outrageous and . . . foolish.” His antics seem delightfully bizarre until we remind ourselves that he was important and powerful. “The kaiser is like a balloon,” Bismarck reflected, “if you don’t keep fast hold of the string, you never know where he will be off to.” Wilhelm, however, did not want to be tethered. He was a neo-absolutist, a 20th-century monarch with 16th-century instincts. “The will of the King is the highest law,” he insisted. “One cannot help but observe similarities to certain modern politicians,” Hoyer reflects.

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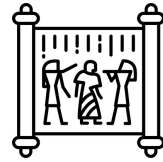
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History A Level



One man, three wars and the creation of Germany

Wilhelm could not tolerate a strong chancellor. As Hoyer writes, he wanted instead a “sock puppet” to implement his every whim. That proved intolerable for Bismarck, who resigned in 1890. The genius gave way to the buffoon. Thereafter, Germany became the kaiser writ large, the nation’s aspirations an outgrowth of the kaiser’s insecurities. A supremely covetous man, he wanted an empire and a navy because Britain had both. His grandiose desires, writes Hoyer, were eventually achieved, but only “in exchange for diplomatic isolation and looming economic catastrophe.”

Wilhelm did not specifically want a world war, but that was the logical outcome of his erratic behaviour. This story, Hoyer reflects, ends “where it had started: in blood and iron,” but “the First World War proved to be too much blood and iron for the young state.”

There’s nothing particularly new in this assessment. The most impressive feature of this book is not its thesis but its brevity. Until now, I didn’t realize that it was possible to write a short book about Germany. Succinctness is an impressive and sadly undervalued quality in an author. A strict word count is a cruel tyrant; difficult decisions about what goes in have to be made and creativity inevitably curtailed. Hoyer nevertheless manages to pepper her trim narrative with some lovely frills. The mark of a really good short book is its ability to inspire curiosity. “Blood and Iron” achieves just that. Careless historians often draw a straight line from Bismarck to Hitler. That, Hoyer argues, is “simplistic.” There’s much to admire in what Bismarck created and Wilhelm ruined. Important elements of the Second Reich survive in today’s Germany, a nation widely respected as stable, mature and responsible. What this story reveals is how easily governmental institutions can be destroyed when people are led astray by intoxicating notions of a place in the sun. That, perhaps, is a lesson for us all.

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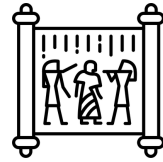
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History A Level



German Crown Princess Victoria Criticizes Bismarck's Personal Regime as Dictatorial (1887-89)

1. What can we learn about the chancellorship of Bismarck from this primary source?

German Crown Princess Victoria was the daughter of Britain's Queen Victoria and married to Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm (1831-1888), who ruled as Kaiser Friedrich III for a mere 99 days before dying of throat cancer on June 15, 1888. When Friedrich ascended to the throne in March 1888, he was unable to implement significant liberal reforms, not only because of his illness but also because of the powerful network that Bismarck had established to retain his power after the death of Kaiser Wilhelm I. In these letters, Victoria comments on Bismarck's omnipotence and what it has already cost Germany. She admires Bismarck's considerable talents in the diplomatic sphere but believes that he has corrupted the nation's political life. The following excerpts from Victoria's correspondence are not precisely dated. It should be noted, however, that during part of this period – for those 99 days – she was not crown princess but actually German Kaiserin (wife of the Kaiser).

'What we have suffered under this régime!!! How utterly corrupting has his [Bismarck's] influence been on his school – his employés, on the political life of Germany! It has made Berlin almost intolerable to live in, if one is not his abject slave!! His party, his followers and admirers are fifty times worse than he is! One feels as if one would like to send up one great cry for deliverance and that if it were answered, one great deep sigh of relief would be given. Alas, all the mischief wrought would take years to repair!! Of course those that only look at the outside aspect of things see Germany strong, great and united, with a tremendous army (in time of war near three millions of men!), a minister who can dictate to the world, a sovereign whose head is crowned with laurels, a trade that is making an effort to outdo all others, the German element making itself remarked everywhere in the world (even if not loved or trusted).

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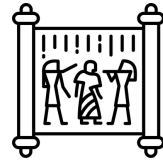
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History A Level



German Crown Princess Victoria Criticizes Bismarck's Personal Regime as Dictatorial (1887-89)

They cannot think we have any reason to complain, but only to be thankful. If they did but know at what price all this is bought!

What a fuss has been made about the [...] anniversary of Prince Bismarck coming into office! More than one sad and bitter thought fills our mind when one thinks of the means he has used to achieve great things and of the havoc he has made of much that was precious, of good and useful men's lives and reputations, etc., and of the evil seeds he has sown, of which we shall some day reap the fruits.

It is perhaps not his fault, he is un homme du moyen âge – with the opinion and principles of those dark days when la raison du plus fort était toujours la meilleure and what was humane, moral, progressive and civilized was considered silly and ridiculous, and a Christian and liberal spirit absurd and unpraktisch. The young generation see his prestige and his success and are proud of it and like basking in the sunshine of his fame and celebrity. He has done very grand things and has unequalled power and unrivalled strength at this moment! Oh, if they were but used for the good cause, always one would be ready to admire and to bless him! He has made Germany great, but neither loved, free, happy, nor has he developed her immense resources for good! Despotism is the essence of his being; it cannot be right or good in the long run!

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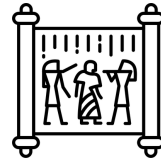
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Get Ahead Tasks

History A Level



Tudors: The Structures of Power

Please watch the following lecture and use the Quizlet to help learn the key facts and vocabulary from the lecture: <https://oyc.yale.edu/history/hist-251/lecture-6>

Professor Wrightson begins by discussing recent trends in English political history, which has expanded from focusing solely on institutions to include analysis of political culture. After this, the formal institutions of government, such as the various law courts, the offices of royal administration, and Parliament, are briefly defined and situated. In the remainder of the lecture, Professor Wrightson explores the dynamics of royal power and authority. The impact of the personalities of Henry VII and Henry VIII on their individual reigns are noted and their relationships with the nobility are focused upon. Professor Wrightson addresses the manner in which the early Tudor kings solidified and extended royal authority through the uses of propaganda, patronage, consultations, and coercion. He ends by signaling the expansion of government which was to occur post-1530 as a result of the issues of the succession and religious change.

Quizlet: <https://quizlet.com/gb/305952398/henry-vii-the-structures-of-power-in-tudor-england-test-on-prof-wrightsons-lecture-flash-cards/?x=1jq>

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