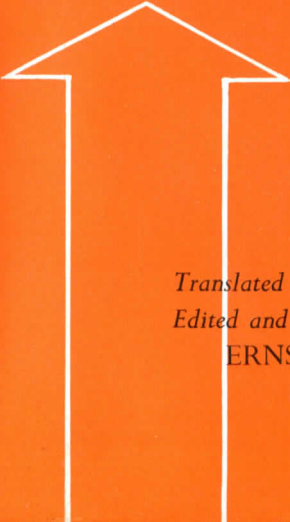




FREDERICK  
ENGELS

THE ROLE  
OF FORCE  
IN HISTORY



*A study of Bismarck's policy  
of blood and iron*

*Translated by* JACK COHEN  
*Edited and with an introduction by*  
ERNST WANGERMANN

This unfinished work by Frederick Engels, in which he dealt with Bismarck's "policy of blood and iron" is here presented for the first time in English translation.

Engels was writing about contemporary events, his aim "to enable us to see clearly why the policy of blood and iron was bound to be successful for a time and why it is bound to fail at the end". He took a more optimistic view of the future of Germany than some of his colleagues, and subsequent events showed that he was over-optimistic. At the same time he was already very well aware of the menace of the unleashing of a major international war. "This time it would be terribly serious, and produce a conflagration of chauvinism for years to come, as every people would be fighting for its existence. . . . Our own party in Germany would be overwhelmed and broken up. . . ."

*The Role of Force in History* was originally planned by Engels as a fourth chapter to continue the three chapters on "The Force Theory" in *Anti-Duhring*, in which he had dealt with the general question of the relation between political force and economic conditions. He set out to interpret contemporary events in Germany in the light of this critique of "the force theory".

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## NOTE

This unfinished study by Friedrich Engels on Bismarck's "policy of blood and iron" in Germany has not previously been translated into English. The translation is made from *Die Rolle der Gewalt in der Geschichte*, published by Dietz Verlag, Berlin, in 1964.

The editor is indebted to the German editors for the informative material in the numbered footnotes: the footnotes of the German edition have been adapted in accordance with the presumed needs of English readers. Engels' own footnotes are marked with an asterisk.

The text is divided into seven numbered sections corresponding to Engels' draft outline for his study. This draft outline is reproduced in the Table of Contents, and will give the reader some indication as to how Engels intended to complete the unfinished final chapter.

E.W. and J.C.  
1967

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## INTRODUCTION

So great was the success of Engels' *Anti-Dühring* that there were frequent requests for reprints, new editions, translations, and the publication of individual sections as pamphlets. One such request, in the middle of the 1880's, was for a separate publication in German of the three chapters entitled "The Force Theory", in which the relationship between political force and economic factors is examined. Engels considered that a mere republication of these mainly theoretical chapters was, under the circumstances, inappropriate. Considering the recent course of German history, the German reader had the right to know his opinion "about the very considerable rôle played by force in the history of his own country during the last thirty years".<sup>1</sup> For this projected publication, therefore, Engels wrote a fourth chapter, containing an account of German history in the period 1848 to 1888 from the point of view of historical materialism. Together with the "Force Theory" chapters from *Anti-Dühring*, it was to be published under the title "The rôle of force in history". Like so many of Engels' projects, this one had also to be abandoned because of his work in preparing the second and third volumes of Marx's *Capital* for publication; the fourth chapter was not completed.

The unfinished manuscript was first published with some arbitrary alterations in 1896 by Eduard Bernstein in

<sup>1</sup> The quotation is from Engels' draft preface to "The rôle of force in history", p. 7 of the German edition.

the *Neue Zeit* on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Second German Empire.<sup>2</sup> This publication provided the basis for French, Italian and Russian translations during the following years. A Russian translation based on the surviving manuscript (a part of which has been lost), was published by the Marx-Engels Institute in Moscow in 1937. All the manuscripts prepared by Engels for the projected work on "The rôle of force in history" were published in the original German in 1964 in the German Democratic Republic.<sup>3</sup> It is this edition which has been used in preparing this first English translation of the unfinished fourth chapter. The list of contents is based on Engels' draft outline for the chapter.

Written eighty years ago, in the period from December 1887 to March 1888, Engels' study has lost none of its freshness, and stands up extraordinarily well to the critical light of modern research.

What was at issue in the debate about the rôle of force in history? Dühring had asserted in his textbooks on philosophy and economics that the basis of the exploitation of man by man was an historical act of force which created an exploitative economic system for the benefit of the stronger man or class. The impulse of a revolutionary movement, therefore, must be moral indignation against the existing unjust imposition of force to perpetuate exploitation. Engels, in his refutation of Dühring, demonstrates the absurdity of postulating political force and the system of power it maintains as independent, prior factors in human history. On the basis of his extensive historical knowledge, he illustrates how the end to which force was employed, and the weapons

which it had at its disposal in various periods, depended on the state of the productive forces and other economic factors. In this way, political power had always, in the long run, to adapt itself to changes in the balance of economic and social forces, and to yield to the dictates of economic development. A mode of production and its corresponding political system must be judged, not on the degree of force required for its maintenance, but on whether it impeded or accelerated economic development. Slavery, when it first emerged, was an historic step forward, because it dissolved the primitive community and developed the productive power of society. Whenever, in the past, political force had come into conflict with economic development, the conflict had always ended with the overthrow of political force: economic development had broken through inexorably and without exception.<sup>4</sup>

In the unfinished fourth chapter, Engels attempts to apply these general propositions to an analysis of the Bismarckian "blood and iron" phase of Prussian-German history. He claims to demonstrate "why the policy of blood and iron was bound to be successful for a time and why it is bound to fail in the end". Though political reaction was victorious in 1815 and again in 1848, it was unable to prevent the growth of large-scale industry in Germany and the growing participation of German commerce in the world market. The incompatibility between modern industry and commerce and Germany's feudal-bureaucratic political system with its territorial divisions was becoming more obvious from year to year. This incompatibility, magnificently described by Engels on the basis of his personal experience as an industrialist, brought the industrial and commercial bourgeoisie into the movement for German unification. They brought into it a hard-headed business attitude and a new note of

<sup>2</sup> *Neue Zeit*, XIV, 1. Band, pp. 676-687, 708-718, 740-747, 772-781, 810-818.

<sup>3</sup> *Die Rolle der Gewalt in der Geschichte*, Bücherei des Marxismus-Leninismus, Band 61, Dietz Verlag Berlin 1964.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Anti-Dühring*, Part 2, chapters 2-4.



cool calculation.<sup>5</sup> "German unity had become an economic necessity."

Engels discusses the different political developments by which unity might, in principle, have been achieved. He gives a remarkably optimistic assessment of the possibility of unification from below by a victorious popular revolutionary movement, overthrowing the German princes and their would-be protector Louis-Napoleon. The possibility of unification under the hegemony of Austria, on the other hand, is briefly dismissed as incompatible with the aims of Habsburg great-power policy. Engels was evidently unaware of the determined efforts made by the Austrian ministers Schwarzenberg and Bruck in the 1850's to secure the removal of the customs barrier between Austria and the German Customs Union, precisely to lay the economic foundation for an Austrian hegemony in Germany.<sup>6</sup> As to the evolution of Prussian policy towards an initiative for German unification, the most significant factor in Engels' analysis of it is Louis-Napoleon. The army reorganisation of 1860/61, which gave rise to the great "conflict" between the Crown and the liberal-bourgeois majority in the Chamber, was imposed on the Prussian government by the Napoleonic threat, real or apparent, to the Left Bank of the Rhine. As the conflict developed, there seemed only two possible outcomes to it: either a *coup d'état* and the return to undisguised absolutism on the pre-1848 pattern, or surrender to the liberal majority and the acceptance of parliamentary control over army affairs. The generals were quite prepared for the *coup d'état*, but the king, William I, who had only just succeeded to the throne, hesitated to violate his corona-

<sup>5</sup> Georg v. Siemens, later director of the *Deutsche Bank*, discussed even the Schleswig-Holstein question in 1866 only from the point of view of economic considerations: cf. H. Böhme, *Deutschlands Weg zur Grossmacht*, Köln-Berlin 1966, p. 205.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 14-45.

tion oath so soon after taking it, and did not wish to risk this supreme affront to liberal opinion. Surrender, on the other hand, was obviously unacceptable both to the king and to the generals.

A third way out was found by Bismarck, appointed Prime Minister of Prussia in September 1862. Bismarck's policy, Engels argues, was nothing more nor less than the application of Bonapartism to the Prussian-German situation. Louis-Napoleon had been able to destroy the political domination of the bourgeoisie, because he secured its social domination. The suppression of parliament was accepted in a situation in which profits soared. Inspired by this success, Bismarck defeated the liberal bourgeoisie in the struggle for political power by carrying out effectively the bourgeoisie's own national and economic programme. Such a policy suggested itself the more readily because it made possible the resumption of the traditional Prussian territorial expansion. If the policy of blood and iron was successful in the period 1864 to 1870, this was so, according to Engels' argument, because it was employed to serve, not some arbitrary policy dictated by Bismarck's whim, but the execution of the programme of the rapidly developing German bourgeoisie. In return, the bourgeoisie accepted its defeat in the struggle for constitutional control over the government, and contented itself with a parliament without power.<sup>7</sup>

Engels had demonstrated why, in the light of his theory, "the policy of blood and iron was bound to be successful for

<sup>7</sup> Laws passed by the popularly elected *Reichstag* were subject to approval and implementation by the *Bundesrat* whose members were appointed by the "associated governments" of the Empire, and in which the Prussian delegation could not be outvoted. The army was specifically excluded from the competence of the *Reichstag*, and the army estimates were voted for a period of seven years (*Septennat*).

a time". On what grounds did he assert that "it (was) bound to fail in the end"?

Engels argues that Bismarck could have given long-term stability to his newly-created Empire only by acting in accordance with historical development—sacrificing the bankrupt Junkers, steering a course towards an English type of bourgeois parliamentary régime with a bourgeois landed aristocracy as its honorific representatives, and thus, to put it in his own words, "adapting Germany's political to her industrial conditions". Bismarck did not do this. On the contrary, he preserved the old Prussian state, and created conditions in which the Junkers, his own class, could continue to enjoy their age-old predominance. For the sake of the interests of his class, he was going to defy the dictates of historical development. Engels seems almost surprised that a statesman who had tasted the signal triumphs which were the reward of acting in accordance with historical development, should at the height of his power embrace a reactionary policy which he describes unhesitatingly and without qualification as "doomed to failure". How did the policy in fact fare?

Like most of their contemporaries, Marx and Engels were surprised by the overwhelming Prussian victory over Austria in 1866. Up to that time, Bismarck had seemed to them the servant of Russia, not the executor of the German bourgeois programme. However, they quickly reappraised the situation.

"Apart from a Prussian defeat," Marx wrote to Engels, "which might perhaps (but these Berliners!) have led to a revolution, nothing better could have happened than their overwhelming victory."<sup>8</sup>

Engels replied, detailing what seemed to him the positive aspects of the new situation:

<sup>8</sup> Marx to Engels, 7 July 1866, Marx/Engels, *Werke*, XXXI, p. 233.

"The situation in Germany now seems to me fairly simple. From the moment Bismarck carried out the little-German bourgeois programme<sup>9</sup> with the Prussian army and with such colossal success, Germany has moved in this direction so decisively that we no less than others must accept the *fait accompli*, whether we like it or not. As far as the *national* side of the question is concerned, Bismarck will presumably have to establish the little-German Empire with the frontiers demanded by the bourgeoisie, i.e. including south-western Germany: the phrases about the Main frontier and the optional South German separate confederacy are presumably intended for purely French consumption, and meanwhile the Prussians are marching on Stuttgart. . . .

"Politically, Bismarck will be compelled to rely on the bourgeoisie, because he needs them against the Princes. Perhaps not immediately, since his prestige and the army are sufficient for the moment. But as soon as he wants to secure from parliament the conditions necessary for central governmental power, he will have to make concessions to the bourgeois. And the natural course of events will compel him or his successors to appeal to the bourgeoisie again and again. This means that even if for the moment Bismarck does not make more concessions than he absolutely must, he will nevertheless be driven more and more into a bourgeois direction.

"What is good about the whole thing is that the situation has been simplified, and a future revolution made easier by the elimination of riots in the small capitals and the acceleration of political development. When all is said and done, a German parliament is something quite different from a Prussian chamber. Everything connected with the petty states will be swept along by the movement, the worst particularist influences will fade away, and the political parties will at last become national parties instead of local ones."<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> i.e. the unification of Germany under Prussian hegemony, excluding the German-speaking provinces of the Habsburg Empire.

<sup>10</sup> Engels to Marx, 25 July 1866, Marx/Engels, *Werke*, XXXI, pp. 240-241.

As against all these positive aspects, Engels saw only one major negative one for Germany, namely that the whole country would be flooded by Prussianism. He added that nothing could be done against this. The only reasonable course, therefore, was to accept the actual situation without approving of it, and to utilise the greater opportunities which would now present themselves for the organisation of the of the German working class on a national basis.<sup>11</sup>

In the light of this optimistic perspective, Bismarck's efforts to secure the continuation of the old Junker supremacy did indeed seem to be doomed to failure. But Engels' optimism was not universally shared in the German labour movement. Wilhelm Liebknecht, Marx's friend and fellow exile, who had returned to Germany in 1862 and was successfully building up a working-class political party there, reacted to the events of 1866 quite differently. He considered that the positive aspects were completely outweighed by the increase and consolidation of the military might of Prussia. Far from "accepting" the new situation, Liebknecht made opposition to Prussia the main point in his propaganda and agitation, and he co-operated with the *Volkspartei* and other petty-bourgeois and particularist groups. Marx and Engels were highly critical of this, fearing that association with these elements would fatally compromise their party in the eyes especially of the north German workers.<sup>12</sup> Liebknecht persisted in his line, and justified it in a letter to Engels:

"No doubt, our work has been *simplified* by the events of last year (1866), but at the same time it has been made more difficult. A few dozen disunited, or at least not really co-

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 241.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Engels to Marx, 22 May 1868, Marx to Engels, 29 July 1868, Engels to Marx, 3 March 1869, *ibid.*, XXXII, pp. 90, 128, 271. Cf. also R. P. Morgan, *The German Social Democrats and the First International 1864-1872*, Chapter I.

operating enemies are more easily overcome than one who has concentrated the power of these few dozen in his own hands. If Prussia consolidates herself, it will not be possible for any foreign Power to defeat her, and not even a revolution in the wake of the forthcoming French revolution<sup>13</sup> could overthrow her. She would only fall when the German proletariat is ripe (through numbers and intelligence) to assume power. But we still have several generations to wait for that."<sup>14</sup>

Thus there were two diametrically opposed estimates concerning the consequences of the Prussian victory for future revolutionary prospects. Liebknecht's pessimistic estimate may seem to have been contradicted by the impressive growth in the 1870's and 1880's of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD),—"the most revolutionary party known to history", Engels called it in *Anti-Dühring*—and especially by Bismarck's spectacular failure even to retard its rate of growth through the repressive Socialist Law.<sup>15</sup> But did the million or so socialist voters and the few dozen socialist M.P.'s in the powerless *Reichstag* really represent a serious threat to the Prussian power structure, rebuilt and consolidated by Bismarck in the years after 1866?

It has become fashionable to interpret Engels' interest in the electoral fortunes of the SPD as evidence that in the last period of his life he had virtually become a reformist waiting for a parliamentary majority.<sup>16</sup> But even in his most

<sup>13</sup> The revolutionary overthrow of Louis-Napoleon's régime was confidently expected.

<sup>14</sup> Liebknecht to Engels, 11 December 1867, *Wilhelm Liebknecht: Briefwechsel mit Karl Marx u. Friedrich Engels*, The Hague 1963, p. 82.

<sup>15</sup> The law was enacted in 1878 after an attempt on the life of the Emperor. All the party's publications were suppressed and its public political activity prohibited. The law was defied by very successful illegal activities.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. for instance G. Lichtheim, *Marxism*, London 1961, Pt. 5.

optimistic moments, Engels did not envisage an eventual socialist majority in the *Reichstag* simply taking over political power from the Junkers and generals. Such a majority could not emerge from the infertile soil of Bismarckian political stability and reaction; it could only follow the disintegration of the Bismarckian political system.

"Our turn can only come," Engels wrote to August Bebel, "when the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties have openly and in practice proved their inability to govern the country."<sup>17</sup>

Clearly, Engels considered the revival of some kind of liberal-bourgeois opposition to Junker reaction to be a prerequisite for any real political advance. In 1886 he thought that there were signs of such a revival, indications

"that the German bourgeois was once more being compelled to do his political duty, to oppose the present system, so that at long last there will be some progress again."<sup>18</sup>

He asked Bebel to send him any bourgeois papers which reflected this important development. Bebel replied that he saw no evidence to sustain Engels' hopes. Only one bourgeois paper was opposing the Socialist Law; and this was due to the influence of its editor Franz Mehring, who not long after went over to the Social Democrats. "The bourgeois opposition in Germany," he concluded, "is finished for good."<sup>19</sup> Engels thought nevertheless that the government of Bismarck's successors, who would inevitably be smaller and less capable men, would drive the German bourgeoisie willy

<sup>17</sup> Engels to Bebel, 28 October 1885, *August Bebel: Briefwechsel mit Friedrich Engels*, The Hague 1965, p. 242.

<sup>18</sup> Engels to Bebel, 13 September 1886, *ibid.*, p. 286.

<sup>19</sup> Bebel to Engels, 12 October 1886, *ibid.*, p. 295; cf. especially note 10 with some of the evidence on which Bebel based his assertion.

nilly into opposition. He refused to believe that the political stagnation of that time could be anything but transitory.<sup>20</sup> He was too sanguine. The feeble bourgeois political stirrings which did follow Bismarck's dismissal in 1890, were quickly nipped in the bud by a Junker-bourgeois compromise, the so-called *Sammlungspolitik*, which launched the German empire on a policy of overseas expansion and produced the naval race. All potential bourgeois political energies were henceforth channelled into enthusiasm for the navy and Anglophobia.<sup>21</sup>

If the German bourgeois could not be "compelled to do his political duty", the labour movement had to lead the struggle for political democracy. Marx and Engels had always been convinced that the working class could achieve power only in the political context of a democratic republic. When the SPD programme was fundamentally revised in 1891, Engels urged that the "political demands" should include the democratic republic and the abolition of the reserved princes' rights.

"Surely you cannot revolutionise society, while Bavarian-Württemberg separate rights exist, and while the map of Thuringia presents its present pathetic aspect. Prussia, on the other hand, must cease to exist, and must be divided into self-governing provinces, so that specific Prussianism ceases to weigh so heavily on Germany."<sup>22</sup>

Engels' suggestions were rejected almost without discussion by the SPD leadership. Bebel briefly indicated the reasons for this:

"To adopt the republic as our aim is impossible under our German conditions. Our people would be driven into a corner in their agitational activity, being constantly con-

<sup>20</sup> Engels to Bebel, 23 October 1886, *ibid.*, p. 298.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. P. Anderson, *The Background of anti-English Feeling in Germany 1890-1902*, Washington 1939, pp. 66-68, 128-130.

<sup>22</sup> Quoted in *August Bebel*, *op. cit.*, p. 425, n. 6.

fronted with the accusation: you are going to use force. . . . To make a stand against the petty states is unnecessary. We should be playing Prussia's game, and this would be both purposeless and unsuccessful. . . . In the Party, this question is regarded as irrelevant and finished. The petty states exist like dozens of other equally superfluous institutions which will disappear of their own accord when the ground on which they stand begins to shake."<sup>23</sup>

This letter shows to what extent the policy of the SPD was dictated by opportunist considerations even at the time when the phraseology of the party programme was at its most revolutionary. The refusal to tackle the problem of the monarchy was only one example of the Social Democratic leaders' determination to exclude from the Party's programme anything which might be construed as a policy of violence. Moreover, the letter reveals a quite extraordinary lack of political understanding. The idea that a campaign against the petty states would serve the interests of Prussia could arise only from a complete misunderstanding of Prussia's policy in 1866. The decision taken in that year not to annex all the petty states was in the best interests of Prussian policy. The survival of some of these states was a prerequisite of the survival of Prussia as a distinct entity—Bismarck's overriding aim.<sup>24</sup> The bland assurance that they would disappear when the ground underneath them began to shake, completely missed Engels' point that the existence of the states was an essential element in the stability of the ground. In the years which followed the adoption of the

<sup>23</sup> Bebel to Engels, 12 July 1891, *ibid.*, p. 425. The Erfurt Programme, adopted in 1891, is often referred to as a fully Marxist programme. In fact, as the foregoing shows, Engels had important reservations about it, though he welcomed it as a great advance on the semi-Lassallean Gotha Programme.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Sir Henry Howard's report from Munich, 21 August 1866, quoted in V. Valentin, *Bismarck's Reichsgründung im Urteil englischer Diplomaten*. Amsterdam 1938, p. 337.

Erfurt programme, the SPD in fact failed to make any progress in the struggle for the democratisation of the German political structure. Even the 1910/11 agitation for the reform of the Prussian franchise—unchanged since the reactionary revision of 1850!—ended fruitlessly.<sup>25</sup>

The pivotal support of Prussian power was, of course, the army. In 1848 it had suffered only a temporary and partial defeat. Forty years later, it was incomparably stronger, both in numbers and equipment. Engels gave much thought to the implications of this increased strength for the perspectives of revolution. There could be no question after 1848 of a head-on clash between people and army:

"An unarmed people is a negligible force against the modern army of today."<sup>26</sup>

It followed that in a militarist country like Germany, a successful revolution could only take place if it began in the army itself. Engels, as "representative of the general staff of the Party",<sup>27</sup> advocated policies designed to undermine the spirit of absolute submissiveness of the rank-and-file of the Prussian regiments, which were still recruited largely from the oppressed masses of rural labourers.

In 1884, when the army seemed to him "a more infamous tool of reaction than ever before",<sup>28</sup> Engels suggested that the Parliamentary Party should put down a resolution demanding the lease of Crown domains to co-operatives of rural labourers for common cultivation.

"With this, and this alone, can we win the rural labourers; this is the best method of drawing their attention to the fact

<sup>25</sup> For the leadership's refusal to use the weapon of the political mass strike, as demanded by Rosa Luxemburg, cf. P. Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg*, O.U.P. 1966.

<sup>26</sup> Engels to Bebel, 11 December 1884, *August Bebel*, op. cit., p. 204.

<sup>27</sup> This is how he refers to himself in the same letter, *ibid.*, p. 205.

<sup>28</sup> Engels to Bebel, 28 October 1885, *ibid.*, p. 239.

that their future calling is the cultivation of the estates of their present gracious lords for the common account."<sup>29</sup>

As so often, the party leaders in Germany totally failed to understand Engels' line of thought. Bebel wrote that it would be a waste of time to put down resolutions for policies which the present government could on no account entertain.<sup>30</sup> Engels agreed that when the Party made positive suggestions, it should suggest what was practicable.

"But," he added, "*objectively* practicable, not necessarily practicable for the present government. I go further, when we suggest socialist measures calculated to lead to the overthrow of capitalist production (like this one), then only measures which are *objectively practicable* but *impossible* for this government. . . . This proposal will not be carried out by any Junker or bourgeois government. To show the rural proletariat of the eastern provinces the way to end Junker and tenant exploitation; to put the means to do this into their hands; to set in motion the very people whose enslavement and stultification produces the regiments which are the foundation of Prussia; in short, to destroy Prussia from within at the root—they certainly wouldn't do that. It is a proposal which we must take up under all circumstances as long as the large estates exist. . . . With this alone can we destroy Prussia, and the sooner we popularise this proposal the better."<sup>31</sup>

The correspondence between Engels and Bebel on this point was the beginning of a long controversy about the SPD's agrarian programme. Engels' proposals were not adopted by the Party, many of whose leaders were never really convinced that the backward rural labourers could be influenced by socialist ideas. On the other hand, the

<sup>29</sup> Engels to Bebel, 11/12 December 1884, *ibid.*, p. 205.

<sup>30</sup> Bebel to Engels, 7 December 1885, *ibid.*, p. 248.

<sup>31</sup> Engels to Bebel, 20 January 1886, *ibid.*, p. 252.

Bavarian leader Georg v. Vollmar strongly urged policies to reassure the wealthy, labour-employed peasants of his country. The consequent failure to make significant headway among the rural labourers meant, of course, that the German army remained what Engels called it in the 1880's—"a more infamous tool of reaction than ever". In 1907, Karl Liebknecht, Wilhelm's son, tried to alarm the Party concerning the spreading virus of militarism, especially among the conscripted national service men. His proposals, like Engels' earlier ones, were rejected.

Thus, by the time of Engels' death in 1895, practically no progress had been made in undermining the power and stability of the old Prussia. The increasingly impressive electoral showing of the SPD tended to hide its almost total political frustration from its own eyes as well as from those of its enemies. Even Engels was on occasion tempted to oversanguine predictions. But shortly before his death, when the SPD leaders demanded serious cuts in his preface to Marx's *Class Struggles in France* with its discussion of German revolutionary tactics and prospects, he expressed serious misgivings about the party's growing estrangement from the revolutionary tradition.<sup>32</sup> The SPD leaders feared that the complete version would provide the government with a pretext for a new Anti-Socialist Law. Their readiness to buy the continuation of their party's restricted legality at such a price was indeed a dramatic illustration of the vigorous survival of Bismarck's conservative political edifice after his own departure from the political scene.

Engels often attributed such aberrations to the opportunism and petit-bourgeois tendencies which were bound to emerge in a working-class party growing as rapidly as was

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Engels to Richard Fischer, 8 March 1895, now published from a surviving copy in *International Review of Social History*, XII, 1967 Pt. 2.

the SPD. Generally, he was confident that a party with a sound rank-and-file membership could digest such tendencies or, if necessary, eliminate them by an organisational split. It was above all his impression that the spirit of the rank-and-file in Germany *was* sound that kept him optimistic to the end about revolutionary prospects in Germany.

But all the time, Engels was aware of the one development which would destroy the sound spirit of the rank-and-file—the outbreak of a major international war. When in the 1880's the outbreak of such a war seemed probable, he wrote:

"I regard a European war as a misfortune. This time it would be terribly serious, and produce a conflagration of chauvinism for years to come, as every people would be fighting for its existence. All the work of the revolutionaries in Russia, who are on the threshold of victory, would be frustrated and destroyed. Our own party in Germany would be overwhelmed and broken up by a wave of chauvinism, and the same would be the case in France."<sup>83</sup>

At the height of the Bulgarian crisis in 1886, Engels returned to the subject of the probable consequences of a major international conflict:

"So much is certain, the war would push back our movement all over Europe, and destroy it altogether in some countries. It would exacerbate chauvinism and national hatred. Among all the uncertainties, one thing only is certain—that after the war we should have to start again from the beginning, though on a more favourable basis than we have even today."<sup>84</sup>

It was presumably with this prospect in mind that Engels considered the possibility of a general war being deliberately unleashed as the only remaining antidote to the growth of

<sup>83</sup> Engels to Bebel, 22 December 1882, *August Bebel*, op. cit., p. 143.

<sup>84</sup> Engels to Bebel, 13 September 1886, *ibid.*, p. 286.

the revolutionary movement. This was going to be Engels' concluding point, as we can see from the draft outline for the unfinished part of the chapter: "a peace worse than war the result—at best; or a world war."<sup>85</sup> Whether the peace of the last years before 1914 had in fact become "worse than war" for the ruling class in Germany or elsewhere, and whether this was a factor in the decisions of July and August 1914, is still an open question—the subject of much current historical research. The consequences of the international conflict for the labour movement were, however, exactly as Engels had anticipated them thirty years before—at least in Germany.

One can hardly fail to conclude that Bismarck's reactionary Junker empire enjoyed as much long-term stability as any more up-to-date bourgeois régime would have done. Liebknecht's gloomy prognostication as to the results of the great increase in Prussian power was borne out more completely by subsequent German history than was Engels' optimistic assessment of the "positive aspects" of 1866. As German industry had scope for expansion, provided by the national market, the arms race and an expansionist foreign policy, the German bourgeoisie adapted itself with increasing enthusiasm to anachronistic political conditions, and scorned its traditional liberalism. The labour movement, in virtual isolation, proved itself unable to enforce a reform of the political structure, and within it failed to make any significant advance towards the attainment of political power, despite its impressive organisational successes.

German history may, therefore, provide an example, not indeed of political force determining economic conditions, but of an outworn, reactionary régime securing its survival by combining military conquest with some adjustment to the

<sup>85</sup> Draft outline for the last section of chapter four, German edition, p. 118.

requirements of industrial and commercial expansion. It is an example of a reactionary régime successfully drawing the political sting out of economic expansion. As such, it is still an essential object of study, especially for the labour movement. The justification for publishing Engels' work is the brilliant and indispensable contribution which it makes to this study.

ERNST WANGERMANN

## THE ROLE OF FORCE IN HISTORY

Let us now apply our theory to contemporary German history with its practice of violence and Blood and Iron. This will enable us to see clearly why the policy of blood and iron was bound to be successful for a time and why it is bound to fail in the end.

### 1

The Congress of Vienna in 1815 carved up Europe in such a fashion that the complete ineptitude of the rulers and statesmen was revealed to the whole world.<sup>1</sup> General war of the peoples against Napoleon had been the reaction of all the peoples whose national feelings he had brutally outraged. By way of thanks, the aristocrats and diplomats who took part in the Vienna Congress affronted these national feelings even more brutally. The smallest dynasty was given more consideration than the largest nation. Germany and Italy were split up into small states once again. Poland was divided for the fourth time. Hungary remained subjugated. And one cannot really say that the people were wronged, for why did they put up with it and why did they greet the Russian Tsar (Alexander I) as their liberator?

But it could not last. Since the end of the Middle Ages, history had been moving towards a Europe made up of

<sup>1</sup> The Congress of Vienna was in session from September 1814 to June 1815, and devised a new European settlement after the Napoleonic upheaval.



large, national states. Only such national states constitute the normal political framework for the dominant European bourgeois class (*Bürgertum*), and, in addition, they are the indispensable pre-requisite for the establishment of the harmonious international collaboration of nations without which the rule of the proletariat cannot exist. If international peace is to be ensured, then all avoidable national frictions must first be eliminated, every people must be independent and masters in their own house. Thus along with the development of trade, agriculture and industry and with them, of the social predominance of the bourgeoisie, national feeling developed everywhere and the fragmented and oppressed nations demanded unity and independence.

As a result, the Revolution of 1848 was concerned everywhere outside France with the satisfaction of national as much as liberal demands. But everywhere, there appeared behind the victorious bourgeoisie, the threatening shadow of the proletariat which had really won the victory and which drove the bourgeoisie into the arms of the recently defeated enemy, the monarchist, bureaucratic, semi-feudal and military reaction, to which the revolution succumbed in 1849. In Hungary, where this did not happen, the Russians marched in and overthrew the Revolution. Not satisfied with this, the Russian Tsar (Nicholas I) went to Warsaw where he sat in judgment as the supreme arbiter of Europe. He nominated Christian of Glücksburg, his subservient creature, as successor to the throne of Denmark. He humiliated Prussia as she had never been humiliated before, by prohibiting even the slightest expression of ambitions to exploit the movement for German unification, and compelled her to re-establish the *Bundestag* (Federal Diet) and to subordinate herself to Austria.<sup>2</sup> Thus at first sight, the total result of the

<sup>2</sup> This was decided at the Warsaw Conference of October 1850 and put into effect by the Treaty of Olmütz, November 1850.

Revolution seemed to be that in Austria and Germany, government was carried on in constitutional form but in the old spirit, and that the Russian Tsar dominated Europe more than ever before.<sup>3</sup>

In reality however, the Revolution thoroughly shook the bourgeoisie of the dismembered countries out of their long-inherited torpor, especially in Germany. They had secured a share, albeit a modest one, in political power and every political success of the bourgeoisie is exploited in an industrial upswing. The "mad year"<sup>4</sup> now happily behind them, had indicated quite clearly to the bourgeoisie that the old lethargy and torpor must be ended once and for all. As a result of the discoveries of gold in Australia and California and of other factors, an unprecedented expansion of world commerce and an upswing in business activity took place. The development of large-scale industry which had emerged since 1850 and, especially since 1840 in the Rhineland, in Saxony, Silesia and Berlin as well as in one or two towns on the South, now rapidly increased, and domestic industry in the agricultural areas became more and more widespread. The building of railways was speeded up, and emigration which, despite all this, increased on an enormous scale, created a German trans-atlantic steamship service which required no subsidies. German merchants, settled firmly in all overseas centres of commerce, handled an ever-increasing amount of world trade and began gradually to undertake the sale not only of English but also of German industrial products.

But the existence of a mass of petty German states with their many differing commercial and industrial laws was bound to become an intolerable fetter on this powerfully

<sup>3</sup> In the Habsburg Empire the "decreed constitution" of 1848 was actually revoked in 1850, and even constitutional forms disappeared.

<sup>4</sup> Some reactionary German historians described 1848 as "das Tolle Jahr", an expression taken from the title of a novel by Ludwig Bechstein about the Erfurt riots of 1509.

developing industry and on the growing commerce with which it was linked—a different rate of exchange every few miles, different regulations for establishing a business, everywhere, literally everywhere, different kinds of chicanery, bureaucratic and fiscal traps, even in many cases still, guild restrictions against which not even a licence was of any avail. And in addition to all this, the many different settlement regulations and residential restrictions<sup>5</sup> which made it impossible for the capitalists to deploy available labour forces in adequate numbers in the places where iron-ore, coal, water-power and other natural resources offered opportunities for the establishment of industrial enterprises. The ability to exploit the massive labour force of the fatherland in unrestricted fashion was the first condition for industrial development, but wherever the patriotic manufacturer sought to concentrate workers from all over Germany, there the police and Poor Law authorities stepped in against the influx of immigrants. A German Civil Code and complete freedom of movement for all German citizens, a uniform system of commercial law, these were no longer the patriotic fantasies of over-excited students but were now essential conditions of life for industry.

In every state and petty state there were, moreover, different currencies, different weights and measures, often two or three different kinds in the same state. And not one of these countless varieties of coins, weights or measures was recognised on the world market. As a consequence, the merchants and manufacturers who traded on the world market or who had to compete with imported goods, were compelled, in addition to using all these different coins, weights and measures, also to use foreign ones; cotton yarn had to be stapled in English pounds according to weight, silk goods

<sup>5</sup> These regulations secured the right of subjects to a permanent home, and were connected with the old poor law.

made up in metric units, foreign accounts made out in pounds sterling, dollars, francs. And how were large-scale credit institutions to carry on in these very small currency areas with banknotes in guilders here, in Prussian talers there, alongside gold talers, “new two-thirds” talers, Mark Banco, Mark Currant, 20 guilder pieces, 24 guilder pieces . . .<sup>6</sup> all complicated by endless currency calculations and fluctuations in the rates of exchange?

And even if it were possible to cope with all this, how much energy was dissipated in all these irritations, how much time and money lost? At last even in Germany people began to realise that, in these days, time is money.

Developing German industry had to establish itself on the world market. It could only expand by means of exports. This demanded that German businessmen operating abroad enjoyed the protection of international law. French, English and American businessmen could always permit themselves a little more license abroad than at home. Their embassies stood by them and in case of emergencies there were always a couple of warships to fall back on. But the Germans! In the Levant, the Austrians at least could depend on their Embassy to some extent even though it was not of much use. But whenever a Prussian businessman abroad complained to his embassy about some injustice or other, then the reply was always: “It serves you right. What are you doing here anyway? Why don’t you stay at home?”

The citizen of a small state above all was without rights anywhere. Wherever you went, German merchants were under foreign—French, English, American—protection or

<sup>6</sup> The Prussian taler was valid in Prussia from 1750 to 1857; the gold taler was a currency unit in the Free City of Bremen; the “new two-thirds” taler was a North German silver currency; Mark Banco was a Hamburg bank currency used for international trade; Mark Currant was a silver coin in use since the seventeenth century; the 20 guilder piece was the currency unit in the South German states since 1776.

had to become naturalised citizens of their new homelands as quickly as possible. And even if their Embassies had wanted to act on their behalf, what use would it have been? German envoys abroad were themselves treated rather like bootblacks.

One can see from all this that the desire for a united "Fatherland" had a very material foundation. It was no longer the dim impulse of the students of the Wartburg days, when "strength and courage burned in German souls",<sup>7</sup> and when, accompanied by a French melody, "forth rushed the Youth with battleflag on high, for the fatherland to struggle or to die"<sup>8</sup> in order to re-establish the romantic splendour of the medieval Empire, when the banner-bearing youth became a quite ordinary Pietistic servant of princely absolutism—in his old age. Neither was it any longer the much more down-to-earth call for unity advanced by the lawyers and other bourgeois ideologists of the Hambach Festival,<sup>9</sup> who believed that they loved unity and freedom for their own sakes and who seemed quite unaware that proposals to organise Germany as a cantonal republic on the Swiss model, which was the idea of the least muddled amongst them, were just as impracticable as the Hohensaufen Imperialism of the students.<sup>10</sup> No, it was the demand arising from the immediate commercial needs of practical

<sup>7</sup> The Wartburg Festival of October 1817 was an early demonstration in favour of German unification. It was organised largely by university students and professors whose sense of political realities was somewhat limited.

<sup>8</sup> The words are taken from the song: "Jugend-Muth und Kraft" by E. Hinkel, *Deutsche Volkslieder*, Mainz 1849.

<sup>9</sup> The Hambach Festival of May 1832 was a demonstration in favour of constitutional liberty and national unification organised by South German liberals and radicals. It was more representative and revealed more political maturity than the earlier Wartburg Festival.

<sup>10</sup> The period of the Hohenstaufen dynasty (1130-1254) was considered the most glorious period of the medieval German Empire.

businessmen and industrialists for the elimination of all the historically out-dated rubbish which obstructed the free development of trade and industry, for the removal of all the unnecessary irritations, which all his competitors had overcome, and which the German businessman had to put an end to at home if he wished to play a part on the world market. And the people who now demanded it knew what they wanted. They were in business, had been brought up in business, knew how to transact business and were willing to talk business. They knew that while one can demand a pretty stiff price, one must also be prepared to reduce it fairly considerably. They sang songs about the "German fatherland" in which Styria and Tyrol and "Austria rich in honour and in victories" were also included, and which stretched:

*"Von der Mass bis an die Memel,  
von der Etsch bis an den Belt,  
Deutschland, Deutschland über alles,  
über alles in der Welt."*<sup>11</sup>

(From the Maas right up to Memel,  
From the Adige up to the Baltic,  
Germany, Germany above everything,  
Above everything in the world.)

But for this ever-growing fatherland they were prepared to agree to a considerable rebate—20-30 per cent—for full payment in cash. Their plan for unity had been worked out and it was an immediately practicable one.

But German unity was not merely a German question. Since the Thirty Years' War, no single all-German question was ever settled without quite open intervention of other Powers. Frederick II conquered Silesia in 1740 with the aid of the French. In 1803, France and Russia literally dictated

<sup>11</sup> From the "*Lied der Deutschen*" written in 1841 by Hoffman von Fallersleben.

the reorganisation of the Holy Roman Empire through the Recess of the Imperial Diet. Then Napoleon organised Germany to suit his own convenience. And finally, at the Vienna Congress, Germany was again split up into thirty-six states and over two hundred territorial units—large and small—largely at the instigation of Russia, but also of England and France, who were abetted by the German Princes, just as at the Regensburg Diet<sup>12</sup> in 1802-3, which made the dismemberment even worse. In addition, parts of Germany were handed over to foreign rulers. Germany was thus not only rendered powerless and helpless, exhausting herself in internal strife and doomed to political, military and industrial futility; but what was much worse, France and Russia had, as a result of repeated use, acquired a right in the dismemberment of Germany, just as France and Austria assumed the right of seeing to it that Italy remained partitioned. This was the right which Tsar Nicholas asserted in 1850, when he prohibited in most brutal fashion any “unauthorised” changes in the constitution and enforced the re-establishment of the Federal Diet—that expression of the impotence of Germany.

The unification of Germany had therefore to be won in struggle not only against the Princes and other enemies within the country but also against the foreign Powers; or alternatively with the help of the foreign Powers. And what was their position at that time?

## 2

In France, Louis-Napoleon had made use of the struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat to become Presi-

<sup>12</sup> Since the seventeenth century, Regensburg had been the regular meeting place of the Imperial Diet. At the diet of 1802-1803, the German Princes eagerly co-operated with Napoleon and Alexander in the hope of ensuring their own survival in the general reorganisation.

dent with the aid of the peasantry and to become Emperor with the aid of the army. But a new Emperor Napoleon, brought into existence by the Army and operating within the frontiers of France as fixed in 1815, was an impossible absurdity. A re-born Napoleonic Empire meant the expansion of France up to the Rhine, the realisation of the hereditary dream of French chauvinism. But to start with, the Rhine was not Napoleon's for the taking. Any move in this direction would have resulted in a European coalition against France. But there was the alternative possibility of strengthening France's general power position, of gaining new laurels for her army by joining with practically all the rest of Europe in a war against Russia, which had quietly used the period of revolutionary upheaval in Western Europe to occupy the Danubian Principalities and to prepare a new war of conquest against Turkey. England allied herself with France. Austria was friendly to both. Only heroic Prussia kissed the Russian rod and remained in a state of neutral friendship with Russia. But neither England nor France wanted to inflict a really serious defeat on their opponent, and the war therefore ended in a mild humiliation for Russia and a Franco-Russian alliance against Austria.\*

\* The Crimean War was one colossal comedy of errors during which one was bound to ask, “who is deceiving whom?” at each new scene. But the comedy cost untold treasure and close on a million lives. The war had hardly begun before Austria marched into the Danubian Principalities. The Russians withdrew in the face of this. As a result, a war on Russia's frontiers with Turkey became impossible so long as Austria remained neutral. But in order to secure Austria as an ally in a war fought on this frontier, it was essential that the war be waged seriously with the aim of re-establishing Poland and pushing back Russia's Western frontier once and for all. Prussia, through whose territory all Russia's imports still came, would thus have been forced to join in. Russia would then have been blockaded both on land and by river and must soon have been defeated. But this was not the intention of the allies. On the contrary. They were delighted to be relieved of the danger of having to wage a serious war. Palmerston proposed to

The Crimean War made France the leading power in Europe and the adventurer, Louis Bonaparte, the outstanding figure of the day—which really is not saying much. But the Crimean War did not result in France acquiring any new territory. It thus harboured the seeds of a new war, one in which Louis-Napoleon would fulfil his real destiny as the man who had “enlarged the Empire”.<sup>13</sup>

The basis for this new war was already laid in the first one, in that Sardinia was allowed to join the alliance of the Western Powers as a French satellite, with the special rôle of outpost against Austria. It was prepared further at the conclusion of peace through the understanding reached by Louis-Napoleon with Russia, to whom nothing was more acceptable than meting out punishment to Austria.<sup>14</sup>

transfer the battlefield to the Crimea, which suited the Russians, and Louis-Napoleon was only too happy to join in this project. The war in the Crimea could only be a sham war and so all the main participants were satisfied. But Tsar Nicholas took it into his head to wage a real war and overlooked the fact that terrain suitable for a sham war was quite unsuitable for a real one. Russia's advantages in defence, the expanse of its thinly populated territory, impassable and poor in resources, redounded against Russia with every Russian offensive and nowhere more so than in the Crimea. The Steppes of Southern Russia, which should have become the graveyard of the attackers, became the graveyard of Russian armies which Nicholas, with brutal, stupid disregard urged on to Sevastopol one after another, the last ones in deep winter. And when the last hurriedly mustered companies, with hardly any equipment, poorly provisioned, had lost two-thirds of their strength on the march (whole battalions perished in the snow) and the rest were in no state to drive the enemy out of Russia, then the arrogant, empty-headed Nicholas collapsed miserably and poisoned himself. Once this had happened, the war became a sham war once again and peace was soon concluded.

<sup>13</sup> “*Mehrer des Reichs*” was part of the official title of the Holy Roman Emperors.

<sup>14</sup> The close understanding reached between France and Russia after the Crimean War culminated in the secret treaty of March 1859. Russia promised neutrality in a Franco-Sardinian war against Austria, while France was to support Russia's efforts to secure revision of the Black Sea clauses of the Treaty of Paris.

Louis-Napoleon was now the idol of the European bourgeoisie; not only because he had “saved society” by his *coup d'état* of 2 December 1851<sup>15</sup> when he destroyed the political domination of the bourgeoisie, only to preserve its social domination; not only because he showed how, under favourable conditions, universal suffrage could be transformed into an instrument for the oppression of the masses; not only because under his rule, industry and commerce and particularly speculation and stock-exchange swindling advanced at a rate previously unknown; but above all, because in him the bourgeoisie saw the first “great statesman” who was flesh of their flesh, bone of their bone. He was an upstart, a *parvenu*, like every other real bourgeois. Willing to try anything, he had been a Carbonari conspirator in Italy,<sup>16</sup> artillery officer in Switzerland, debt-ridden aristocratic tramp and Special Constable in England.<sup>17</sup> Always and everywhere the Pretender, he prepared himself in all countries by his adventurous past and his moral failings for the post of Emperor of the French and arbiter of Europe's destinies, just as that bourgeois *par excellence*, the American bourgeois, prepares himself for becoming a millionaire by a series of partly honest and partly fraudulent bankruptcies. As Emperor, he not only subordinated policy to the interests of capitalist profit and stock-exchange swindling, but he conducted his policy quite on stock-exchange lines and speculated on the “principle of nationality”.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Louis-Napoleon made himself President of France for life in violation of the 1848 constitution.

<sup>16</sup> The *Carbonari* were Italian secret societies during the first half of the nineteenth century, which kept alive the traditions of the French Revolution and helped to prepare the way for Italian unification.

<sup>17</sup> As Special Constable Louis-Napoleon had taken part in the preventive measures against the Chartist demonstration on 10 April 1848.

<sup>18</sup> Napoleon III specialised in exploiting the nineteenth-century movement for national self-determination for the purpose of Great Power ambition. Cf. Marx's work *Herr Vogt*, in Marx, Engels, *Werke*, Vol. 14.

The right to impose fragmentation on Germany and Italy had hitherto been an inalienable, fundamental right of French policy. Louis-Napoleon now began to barter it away bit by bit against so-called compensation. He was ready to help Germany and Italy end their fragmentation, provided both countries paid him for every step towards unification by ceding territory to him. In this way, not only would French chauvinism be satisfied and the Empire gradually restored to its 1801 frontiers,<sup>19</sup> but France would be able to pose again as the enlightened and liberating power, and Louis-Napoleon as the protector of oppressed nations. And the whole bourgeoisie, full of enthusiasm for enlightenment and nationality, because they were supremely interested in eliminating all obstacles to trade on the world market, would unanimously applaud this world-liberating enlightenment.

A beginning was made in Italy, where unrestrained domination by Austria had prevailed since 1849. Austria was the general scape-goat of Europe at that time. The meagre results of the Crimean War were not put down to the irresolution of the Western Powers, who had only wanted a sham war, but to the indecisive attitude of Austria, for which no-one was more responsible than the Western Powers themselves. But Russia was so outraged by Austria's advance on the Pruth—her thanks for the help Russia gave her in Hungary in 1849—(although it was precisely this advance which had saved Russia) that she regarded any attack on Austria with the greatest pleasure. Prussia no longer counted, and had already been treated like dirt at the Paris Peace Congress. And so the war for the liberation of Italy “right to the Adriatic” was plotted with the connivance of Russia, unleashed in the spring of 1859 and concluded in the summer at the river Mincio. Austria was not thrown out of

<sup>19</sup> The Treaty of Lunéville of February 1801 confirmed the annexation to France of Belgium, Luxemburg and the Left Bank of the Rhine.

Italy. Italy was not liberated “right to the Adriatic”, nor was she unified. Sardinia was able to expand, but France acquired Savoy and Nice and thus her 1801 frontier with Italy.

But the Italians were not satisfied with this. Small-scale manufacture still prevailed in Italy at that time. Large-scale industry was still in its infancy. The working class was not by any means completely expropriated or proletarianised. Workers still owned their own means of production in the towns, and industrial work was undertaken in the agricultural areas by small landowners and working peasants as a supplementary source of income. As a consequence, the energy of the bourgeoisie was not as yet spent in the struggle against a modern, class-conscious proletariat. And since the fragmentation of Italy was due primarily to domination by Austria, under whose protection the Princes carried misgovernment to the most extreme lengths, the big, landed aristocracy and the urban masses backed the bourgeoisie as the champion of national independence. But Austrian domination was shaken off in 1859—except for Venetia—and its further intervention in Italian affairs under cover of Russia or France made impossible. Nobody was afraid of her any longer. And in Garibaldi, Italy possessed a hero like those of Antiquity, a man who could, and did, perform miracles. He put an end to the whole kingdom of Naples with his thousand volunteers, actually united Italy and tore holes in the artificial web of Bonapartist policy. Italy was free and virtually united, not through the machinations of Louis-Napoleon, but through the Revolution.

After the Italian war, the foreign policy of the Second French Empire no longer seemed a mystery to anyone. The conquerors of the great Napoleon were to be chastised, but *l'un après l'autre*, one after the other. Russia and Austria had received their share of attention; the next one to be

dealt with was Prussia. And Prussia was more despised than ever; its policy had been cowardly and pathetic during the Italian war, just as it had been at the time of the Peace of Basle in 1795.<sup>20</sup> The result of its policy of keeping a "free hand" was that it stood completely isolated in Europe, that all its neighbours large and small, were looking forward to the spectacle of Prussia being chastised, that it had a "free hand" only to surrender the Left Bank of the Rhine to France.

In the first period after 1859, the conviction was widespread, and nowhere more than in the Rhineland, that the Left Bank of the Rhine was irretrievably lost to France. People did not like it, but they saw it coming like an inescapable fate and, if the truth be told, they did not fear it too much. Old memories of the French, who really had brought freedom, were re-kindled in the minds of the peasantry and of the petty bourgeoisie. Of the bourgeoisie, the financial aristocracy, especially in Cologne, was already deeply involved in the fraudulent transactions of the Paris Credit Mobilier<sup>21</sup> and other Bonapartist companies, and called loudly for annexation.\*

<sup>20</sup> The Peace concluded unilaterally by Prussia during the war of the First Coalition. Prussia's refusal to aid Austria unconditionally against France in 1859, generally made a bad impression in Germany.

<sup>21</sup> The Bank founded by the Péreire brothers in 1852. It specialised in stock-exchange speculation and industrial investments. Despite its close links with Napoleon III's régime, it failed in 1867.

\* Marx and I were able to convince ourselves on the spot on a number of occasions, that this was the general outlook of people in the Rhineland. Industrialists on the Left Bank used to ask me, among other things, how their concerns would fare under the French Customs tariff.

## 3

But the loss of the Left Bank of the Rhine meant not only the weakening of Prussia but also of Germany. And Germany was split up more than ever. Austria and Prussia, more alienated from each other than ever because of Prussia's neutrality in the Italian war, the mob of petty princes looking to Louis-Napoleon half in trepidation, half with longing, as the Protector of a new Confederation of the Rhine<sup>22</sup>—this was the situation in the official Germany. And this was at a time when only the united forces of the whole nation could have warded off the danger of dismemberment.

But how were the forces of the whole nation to be unified? Three courses were open after the attempts of 1848, nebulous without exception, had failed, and by their failure had dissipated much of the fog.

The first was the real unification of the country by the elimination of all the separate, individual states, in other words, the open revolutionary way. This course had just succeeded in Italy, where the Savoyard dynasty had joined forces with the Revolution and thereby won the Crown of Italy. But our German Savoyards, the Hohenzollerns, and even their most audacious Cavours, of the Bismarck stamp, were absolutely incapable of such bold deeds. The people would have had to do everything themselves in a war over the Left Bank of the Rhine and they would, presumably, have been capable of doing what was necessary. The inevitable retreat of the Prussians across the Rhine, static war around the Rhine fortresses, the inevitably following betrayal by the South German Princes might have sufficed to

<sup>22</sup> The Confederation of the Rhine, founded in 1806, organised the German states apart from Austria and Prussia as satellite states of Napoleon I. It disintegrated in 1813.

let loose a national movement in face of which all the dynasties would have been scattered to the winds. And Louis-Napoleon would then have been the first to sheathe the sword. The Second Empire could only use reactionary states as enemies, against which it could pose as the heir of the French Revolution and the liberator of the peoples. It was powerless in face of a people themselves involved in a revolution; indeed, a successful German revolution could have provided the stimulus for the overthrow of the entire French Empire. This is the best course events might have taken. If the worst had come to the worst, if the dynasts had overcome the movement, the Left Bank of the Rhine would have been temporarily lost to France, the active or passive betrayal by the dynasts would have been exposed to the whole world, and Germany would have had no choice but Revolution, the expulsion of the Princes and the establishment of the unified German Republic.

As things stood, this way of unifying Germany could only have been embarked on if Louis-Napoleon had started the war for the Rhine frontier. This war did not take place for reasons which will be mentioned later. As a result, national unification ceased to be a desperately urgent, life-and-death question which had to be settled immediately, today or tomorrow, on pain of destruction. The nation could wait for a time.

The second course was unification under Austrian predominance. Since 1815, Austria had willingly retained its position as a compact state covering a well defined area, conditions imposed on it by the Napoleonic wars. It did not lay claim to its previous possessions in South Germany of which it had been deprived. It was satisfied with attaching to itself old and new territories which could more easily be assimilated geographically and strategically to what remained of the old core of the Monarchy. The separation of German

Austria from the rest of Germany, begun through the protectionist tariffs of Joseph II, intensified by the Italian policy of Francis II, and consummated by the dissolution of the Empire<sup>23</sup> and the Confederation of the Rhine, was not overcome after 1815. Metternich surrounded his state with a real Chinese wall on its German side. The tariff wall kept out Germany's material products, the censorship its intellectual ones; the unspeakable chicanery with regard to passports limited personal contact to the absolute minimum. Internally, security was maintained by a régime of arbitrary absolutism, which was unique even in Germany and which was directed against any kind of political stirrings, however faint. Austria thus stood absolutely apart from the whole bourgeois-liberal movement in Germany. The events of 1848 at least brought about the dismantling of most of the intellectual wall, but the consequences were hardly conducive to bringing Austria closer to the rest of Germany. On the contrary. Austria emphasised more and more its position as an independent Great Power. And thus, although the Austrian soldiers of the Federal fortresses were very popular, while the Prussian soldiers were hated and reviled, and though Austria was still popular and respected in the predominantly Catholic southern and western parts of Germany; nevertheless, nobody seriously thought of German unification under Austrian domination, except perhaps one or two German Princes, rulers of small or medium-sized states.

It could not indeed be otherwise. Austria herself did not desire anything else, although she secretly fostered romantic dreams of Empire. The Austrian tariff barrier eventually remained the only material barrier in Germany, and it was all the more deeply resented for that. The independent Great Power policy was pointless, if it did not mean the sacrifice of

<sup>23</sup> Francis II's renunciation of the Imperial Crown in August 1806 marked the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire.



German in favour of Austrian, that is, Italian, Hungarian etc. interests. After the Revolution, Austria remained what it had been before, the most reactionary of all German-speaking states, the one most reluctant to adapt itself to modern developments, and in addition, the only specifically Catholic Great Power. The more the post-Revolution government sought to re-establish the old Papal and Jesuitical order,<sup>24</sup> the more it found it impossible to maintain its influence in a country which was two-thirds Protestant. And finally, unification under Austria would only have been possible by smashing Prussia. However small a disaster for Germany this would be in itself, the destruction of Prussia by Austria would have been just as calamitous as the destruction of Austria by Prussia would be before the impending victory of the Revolution in Russia (after which it will be unnecessary because Austria, made superfluous by such an event, must then collapse of itself).

In short, German unity under Austria's wing was a romantic dream and stood revealed as such, when the Princes of the small and medium-sized states met in Frankfurt in 1863 to proclaim Francis-Joseph as German Emperor. The King of Prussia simply stayed away and the Kaiser comedy ended in a miserable fiasco.<sup>25</sup>

There remained the third way—unification under the leadership of Prussia. And because this is in fact what happened, we descend from the sphere of speculation to the more solid if rather dirtier ground of practical *Realpolitik*.

Since Frederick II's time, Prussia regarded Germany as it did Poland, simply as an area to be conquered, an area

<sup>24</sup> The measures taken by the Schwarzenberg ministry and its successors amounted to the dismantling of the work of Maria Theresa and Joseph II with regard to Church-State relations, and culminated in the *Concordat* of 1855.

<sup>25</sup> Bismarck had to struggle hard to prevail on the King to decline the invitation to Frankfurt.

where one seized what one could, but it was understood as a matter of course that one had to share it with others. Sharing Germany with others—with France above all—had been Prussia's "German vocation" ever since 1740. "*Je vais, je crois, jouer votre jeu; si les as me viennent, nous partagerons*" (I believe I shall play your game. If I get the aces, then we'll share)—these were Frederick's parting words to the French Ambassador Beaurau, as he set out on his first war. True to this "vocation", Prussia betrayed Germany at the Peace of Basle in 1795, agreed in advance to the cessation of the Left Bank of the Rhine to France (the Treaty of 5 August 1796) in exchange for a promise of more territory, and promptly received its reward for the betrayal of the Reich in the 1802 Recess of the Federal Diet dictated by Russia and France.<sup>26</sup> Prussia betrayed its allies, Russia and Austria, again in 1805, as soon as Napoleon dangled the bait of Hanover before it, for which it went every time; but it got caught in its cunning but stupid machinations, and so became involved in war with Napoleon and got its deserts at Jena.<sup>27</sup> Such was the effect of this beating, that even after the victories of 1813 and 1814, Frederick William III wanted to withdraw from all the West German outposts and confine himself to the occupation of North-East Germany and, if possible, to withdraw from Germany, as Austria had done. This would have meant that the whole of Western Germany would have been transformed into a new Confederation of the Rhine under Russian or French patronage. The plan did not succeed. Westphalia and the Rhine provinces were forced on the

<sup>26</sup> Prussia received the secularised bishopric of Münster and other West German territories.

<sup>27</sup> For a recent short summary in English of Prussia's tortuous and unsuccessful policy in 1805-1806, cf. F. M. H. Markham, *Napoleon and the Awakening of Europe*, London 1954, pp. 82-86.

King against his will and with them a new "German vocation".

Apart from the purchase of a few small areas, annexations ceased for the time being. Internally, the old bureaucratic Junker order gradually began to emerge again. The promise of a constitution, made at a time of dire necessity, was not fulfilled. But despite this, the bourgeoisie increasingly prospered, even in Prussia, for without trade and industry, the haughty, arrogant Prussian state itself would now count for nothing. Slowly, reluctantly, in homoeopathic doses, economic concessions had to be made to the bourgeoisie. And in one sense these concessions opened up the prospect of fostering Prussia's "German vocation", namely in that Prussia, in order to put an end to the tariff barriers which divided its two halves, invited the adjoining German states to form a Customs Union. This is how the *Zollverein* (Customs Union) came into existence. It remained a pious hope until 1830 (only Hessen-Damstadt had come in) but afterwards, in consequence of the somewhat more rapid tempo of political and economic development it soon secured the economic annexation of Central Germany to Prussia.<sup>28</sup> The non-Prussian coastal states remained outside until after 1848.

The *Zollverein* was a great success for Prussia. That it signified a victory over Austrian influence was the least important aspect of it. The most important thing was that it ranged the bourgeoisie of the small and medium-sized principalities on the side of Prussia. Apart from Saxony, there was no German state in which industry had developed to the extent the Prussian had. And this was not due solely to natural and historical factors, but also to the larger customs area and a larger home market. And the more the *Zollverein*

<sup>28</sup> The final formation of the *Zollverein* was achieved in 1834. Its success did much to strengthen Prussia as against Austrian influence in Germany.

expanded and admitted the petty states in this home market, the more the burgeoning bourgeois of these states got used to Prussia as their economic and potentially their political leader. And the professors whistled to the tunes sung by the bourgeois. What the Hegelians deduced philosophically in Berlin—that Prussia was destined to stand at the head of Germany—was demonstrated historically by the disciples of Schlosser, especially by Häusser and Gervinus. It was of course assumed that Prussia would change its whole political system and fulfil the demands of the ideologists of the bourgeoisie.\*

But all this did not happen out of any special love for the Prussian state, in the way the Italian bourgeoisie accepted Piedmont as the leading state after it had placed itself openly at the head of the national and constitutional movement. It happened reluctantly; the bourgeoisie accepted Prussia as the lesser evil, because Austria excluded them from its markets and because in comparison with Austria, even Prussia seemed to have a certain bourgeois character, if only because of her mean financial policy. Unlike other large states, Prussia possessed two good institutions: universal military service and universal compulsory education. She had introduced them in times of desperate danger and, when times improved, she merely eliminated the possible dangers inherent in them in certain circumstances by deliberate neglect and restricted application. But they continued to exist on paper and with them Prussia could one day arouse the potential energy dormant among the mass of the people, to an extent which was unattainable in other countries with

\* In 1842, the *Rheinische Zeitung* discussed the question of Prussian hegemony from this standpoint. In the summer of 1843, Gervinus told me in Ostend, that Prussia must come to be the leader of Germany but that three things were necessary in order that this could come about: Prussia must have a Constitution, it must institute freedom of the Press and it must pursue a national foreign policy.

the same population. The bourgeoisie accepted these two institutions. In 1840 the compulsory year of military service, which involved the sons of the bourgeoisie, was circumvented fairly easily and cheaply by bribery, especially as the Army itself looked down on the *Landwehr*<sup>29</sup> officers recruited from the commercial and industrial strata. And the larger number of people with a certain minimum of elementary knowledge which compulsory education undoubtedly produced in Prussia, was most useful to the bourgeoisie. As large-scale industry progressed, their numbers were even inadequate.\* Complaints about the high cost of both institutions, which had to be paid for by increased taxation, were voiced mainly by the petty bourgeoisie. The rising bourgeoisie calculated that the considerable but unavoidable future costs of becoming a Great Power would be amply compensated by increased profits.

In short, the German bourgeois indulged in no illusions about Prussian kindliness. If, from 1840 onwards, they leaned towards the idea of Prussian hegemony, this was only because and to the extent that the Prussian bourgeoisie, thanks to its greater economic development, assumed the economic and political leadership of the German bourgeoisie as a whole; because and to the extent that the Rottecks and Welkers of the old Constitutional South were overshadowed by the Camphausens, Hansemanns and Mildes of the Prussian North, the lawyers and professors by the merchants and manufacturers. The Prussian Liberals of the years just before 1848, especially those in the Rhineland, did indeed display a far more vigorous revolutionary spirit than the Swiss-

<sup>29</sup> The *Landwehr* was created by Scharnhorst in 1813. It was a reserve consisting of older men who had done their regular service.

\* At the time of the *Kulturkampf* (i.e. the 1870s), manufacturers in the Rhineland complained to me that they could not promote otherwise suitable workers to be foremen because of their lack of education. This was particularly true in the Catholic districts.

oriented liberals of the South. Two of the best popular political songs since the sixteenth century were composed at this time, the song about the Bürgermeister Tschech and the one about the Baroness von Droste-Fischer, the daring insolence of which now horrifies the same people, who as young men sang them so lustily in 1846.<sup>30</sup>

But all this was soon to be changed. There was the February Revolution and the March Days in Vienna and the Revolution of 18 March in Berlin. The bourgeoisie was victorious without having had to engage in any real struggle; it had not at all wanted the serious fighting which did occur. For the bourgeoisie who only recently had coquetted with Socialism and Communism (especially in the Rhineland) now suddenly discovered that it had not bred just a few industrial working-men, but a working *class*, one which, though still half-asleep, was nevertheless slowly awakening and developing into a proletariat, revolutionary by its innermost nature. And this proletariat, which had won the victories for the bourgeoisie everywhere, was now putting forward demands, especially in France, which were incompatible with the continued existence of the whole bourgeois order. On 23 June 1848 the first terrible struggle between the two classes broke out in Paris. The proletariat was defeated after four days of fighting. From that time onward, the mass of the bourgeoisie throughout the whole of Europe went over to the side of reaction, and united with the bureaucrats, nobles and priests whom it had just overthrown with the help of the workers, in order to fight against the "enemies of society", these self-same workers.

In Prussia the bourgeoisie left its own elected representatives in the lurch and greeted the dissolution of the elected Assembly by the Government in November 1848 with open

<sup>30</sup> Both songs are published in *Historische Volkslieder der Zeit von 1756 bis 1871*, Vol. II, p. 63.

or concealed joy. The Junker-bureaucratic Ministry which now ruled in Prussia for ten years had perforce to rule in a constitutional form. But it revenged itself for this by a system of petty chicanery and oppression, unprecedented even in Prussia, under which no-one suffered more than the bourgeoisie.<sup>31</sup> The bourgeoisie, however, had become contrite, meekly accepted their buffetings and kicks as punishment for their erstwhile revolutionary aspirations, and gradually learned to think what they later avowed quite openly: "We are only dogs after all."

## 4

Then came the Regency. In order to demonstrate his loyalty to the King, Manteuffel had surrounded the successor to the throne, the later William I, with as many spies as Puttkamer now employs to watch the editorial offices of the *Sozialdemokrat*.<sup>32</sup> As soon as William became Regent, Manteuffel naturally received a parting kick and the New Era began.<sup>33</sup> It was only a change of décor. The Prince Regent graciously deigned to allow the bourgeois to be liberals again. The bourgeois made use of this permission with great satisfaction, but deluded themselves into thinking that they now wielded power and that the Prussian state would have to dance to their tune. But this was not by any means the view prevailing in "authoritative circles". The reorganisation of the Army was to be the price paid by the liberal bourgeoisie for

<sup>31</sup> Engels is referring to the ministries of Count Brandenburg (1848-1850) and Otto v. Manteuffel (1850-1858).

<sup>32</sup> As Prussian Minister of the Interior from 1881-1888, Robert Puttkamer was responsible for the execution of the Anti-Socialist Laws.

<sup>33</sup> William became Regent because of Frederick William IV's incurable madness (October 1858). He dismissed the Manteuffel ministry. The resulting optimistic illusions among the liberal opposition gave rise to the term "New Era" in the bourgeois press.

the New Era. By this the Government required only the application of conscription on the scale which had been customary up to 1816. As far as the liberal opposition was concerned, they could say absolutely nothing against it which would not have contradicted their own talk about Prussian leadership and Prussia's German destiny. But the liberal opposition made it a condition of acceptance that the maximum legal period of military service should be two years. This was in itself a quite rational demand. But it was questionable whether it could be forced through, whether the liberal bourgeoisie throughout the country was ready to go to the limit in blood and treasure in order to fight for this condition. The Government insisted on three years, the Chamber on two. The "conflict" broke out.<sup>34</sup> And with the conflict over army reorganisation, foreign policy again became decisive, for home policy as well.

We have seen how Prussia by her attitude in the Crimean and Italian wars had forfeited the last shreds of respect. This deplorable policy could be partially excused by reference to the poor state of the Army. Since it was impossible before 1848 to impose new taxes or raise new loans without consent of the Estates, and since the government was not willing to recall them for this purpose, there was never enough money for the Army, which degenerated completely as a result of this unbridled stinginess. The régime of spit, polish and parades, introduced by Frederick William III did the rest. How helpless this parade army proved itself to be on the battlefields of Denmark, can be read in the pages of Count Waldersee's memoirs. The mobilisation of 1850 was

<sup>34</sup> "*Der Konflikt*" is the term used in German historiography for the constitutional conflict which arose from the refusal of the liberal majority in the Prussian Lower House to accept unconditionally the army reorganisation proposals submitted by the Minister of War, von Roon, in February 1860. It lasted until the Chamber elected in 1866 agreed to Bismarck's Indemnity Bill.

a complete fiasco. Everything was lacking and what was available was mostly useless.<sup>85</sup> All this was changed when the Chambers voted money. The Army was jolted out of the old routine, field service largely replaced parade-ground drill. But the strength of the Army remained the same as it had been in 1820, while all other Great Powers had greatly increased their armed forces, especially France, the very country from which danger now threatened. And this despite the fact that conscription existed in Prussia. Every Prussian was a soldier on paper, and though the population had increased from 10½ millions in 1817 to 17¾ millions in 1858, the Army was not capable of calling up and training more than a third of the possible intake. The Government now demanded that the Army be increased to a size corresponding almost exactly to the increase in population since 1817. But the self-same liberal deputies who ceaselessly demanded that the Government stand at the head of Germany, safeguard her position in the face of foreign powers, re-establish her prestige amongst the nations, argued and haggled and would make no grants except on the basis of the two year term of military service. Had they the power to achieve this aim, about which they were so obdurate? Were the people, or even the bourgeoisie, ready to back them up and fight?

On the contrary. The bourgeoisie applauded the verbal battles between the deputies and Bismarck. But in actual fact, they organised a movement which, although unconsciously, was in reality directed against the majority in the Prussian Chamber. The violations of the constitution of Holstein by Denmark, the forcible attempts at Danisation in Schleswig, infuriated most German citizens.<sup>86</sup> They were

<sup>85</sup> The minor military action in Hesse in the autumn of 1850 revealed the inadequacy and outdatedness of Prussian equipment and tactics.

<sup>86</sup> The Danish efforts in this direction culminated in the total annexation of Schleswig to Denmark, proclaimed in November 1863.

used to being bullied by the Great Powers, but to be kicked around by little Denmark was more than they could bear. *The Nationalverein*<sup>87</sup> (National Society) was established, deriving its support especially from the bourgeoisie of the small states. And the *Nationalverein*, liberal to the core though it was, demanded first and foremost, national unification under the leadership of Prussia, under a liberal Prussia if at all possible, but if necessary under any kind of Prussia.

What the *Nationalverein* demanded most of all was that at long last some progress should be made, that the miserable position of Germans as second class citizens on the world market be ended, that Denmark be cut down to size, that the Great Powers be met with determination in Schleswig-Holstein. And the demand for Prussian leadership was now freed from all the unclarity and day-dreaming which still clung to it until 1850. By now everyone knew that it meant the expulsion of Austria from Germany and the end of petty-state sovereignty, and that neither of these two objectives could be gained without civil war and the partition of Germany. But people no longer feared civil war and the partition of Germany was no more than the logical conclusion of the Austrian tariff barrier. German industry and commerce had developed to such an extent, the number of German business houses spanning the world market had become so numerous, that petty states at home and lack of rights and protection abroad were no longer to be tolerated. And while the strongest political organisation which the German bourgeoisie had ever possessed was, in practice, expressing this

<sup>87</sup> The foundation of the *Nationalverein* in September 1859 was inspired by the events in Italy earlier that year, which marked a great advance towards the unification of the country, and especially by the success of the Italian National Society. The pivot of its policy was to encourage the Prussian Government to accept genuine constitutionalism and to take the initiative for German unification. It was opposed to direct revolutionary action.

vote of no confidence in them, the deputies in Berlin were haggling about the length of military service!

This was the situation when Bismarck set out to intervene actively in foreign policy.

Bismarck is Louis-Napoleon translated from the French adventurist Pretender to the Throne into the Prussian Junker Squire (*Krautjunker*) and German officer-cadet. Like Louis-Napoleon, Bismarck was a man of great practical understanding and immense cunning, a born, crafty businessman, who in other circumstances would have rivalled the Vanderbilts and Jay Goulds on the New York Stock Exchange, and indeed he most effectively steered his private ship into port. But this heightened grasp of practical affairs is often linked with a corresponding limitation of vision, and it was in this respect that Bismarck was "superior" to his French predecessor. For the latter, after all, had his "Napoleonic ideas"<sup>88</sup> which he had worked out for himself during his days of vagabondage (they looked like it), while, as we shall see, Bismarck never exhibited even the ghost of an original political idea and was only good at picking up and using for his own purposes other people's finished ideas. But this narrowness was his good fortune. Without it he would never have been able to view the whole of history from an exclusively Prussian standpoint, and had there been any chink in his fixed Prussian outlook, through which the light of day might have penetrated, he would have failed in his whole mission and there would have been an end to his glory. To be sure, once he had fulfilled in his own way the special mission prescribed for him by forces outside himself, he was at his wits' end. We shall see what somersaults he was driven to perform as a result of his absolute lack of rational ideas and

<sup>88</sup> The allusion is to Louis-Napoleon's book *Des Idées Napoléoniennes*, published in Paris in 1839.

his inability to grasp the historical situation which he himself had created.

If Louis-Napoleon had learned from his own shady past not to be too scrupulous in his choice of means, Bismarck learned to be even less scrupulous from the history of Prussian policy, especially from the history of the so-called Great Elector (Frederick-William) and of Frederick II, and could be so with the reassuring consciousness that he was being true to the tradition of the fatherland. His business acumen taught him to keep his Junker inclinations in check when necessary. When it seemed necessary no longer, they came crudely to the fore again; this was, of course, evidence of decline. His political methods were those of a young member of the Officer Corps. In his attacks on the Prussian Constitution in the Chamber, he did not hesitate to use the phrases and methods by means of which one extricates oneself from awkward scrapes in the officers' mess. All the innovations he introduced into diplomacy were borrowed from officer-cadet conventions. But whereas Louis-Napoleon often became unsure of himself in decisive moments, as for example, at the time of the *coup d'état* in 1851, when Morny had literally to use force in order to get him to go through with what had been begun, or on the eve of the war in 1870, when his uncertainty undermined his whole position, it must be said for Bismarck that nothing of that kind ever happened to him. His willpower never deserted him. Rather was it the case that it was often suddenly transformed into open brutality. And it is this above all which was the secret of his successes. All the ruling classes in Germany, Junkers and bourgeois alike, had so lost all traces of energy, spinelessness had become so much the custom in "educated" Germany, that the one man amongst them who still had willpower thereby became their greatest personality and a tyrant over them, so that they were ready to dance to

his tune even against their better nature and judgment. "Uneducated" Germany has not yet reached that stage. The working people have shown that they have willpower which even Bismarck's strong will cannot break.

A brilliant career lay open before our Junker from the old Mark, if only he had the courage and wit to seize the opportunity. Had not Louis-Napoleon become the idol of the bourgeoisie precisely by dissolving their Parliament but increasing their profits? And did not Bismarck have the same business acumen which the bourgeoisie so admired? Did he not follow his Bleichröder, just as Napoleon followed his Fould? Was there not a contradiction in Germany in 1864 between the representatives of the bourgeoisie in the Prussian Parliament who haggled about the length of military service, and the bourgeoisie in the *Nationalverein* outside, who wanted national action at any price, action for which troops were necessary—a contradiction very similar to that in France in 1851 between the bourgeoisie in the Chamber, who wanted to keep the power of the President in check, and the bourgeoisie outside, who wanted order and strong government, order at any price; a contradiction Louis-Napoleon resolved when he scattered the parliamentary windbags and gave peace and quiet to the bourgeoisie? Wasn't the situation more favourable in Germany for a bold attempt? Did not the reorganisation plan come ready-made from the hands of the bourgeoisie, and were they themselves not clamouring vociferously for an energetic Prussian statesman to carry out their plan, drive Austria out of Germany, and unify the small states under Prussian hegemony? And if in the event the Prussian constitution suffered a few knocks, and the ideologists inside and outside the Chamber were pushed on one side according to their deserts, could not one rely on universal suffrage, as Louis-Napoleon had? What could be more democratic than the introduction of

universal suffrage? Had not Louis-Napoleon demonstrated its complete harmlessness—if handled appropriately? And did not precisely this universal suffrage offer a means of appealing to the broad masses, of coquetting with the reviving social movement, if the bourgeoisie should prove obstreperous?

## 5

Bismarck seized the opportunity. What needed to be done was to repeat Louis-Napoleon's *coup d'état*, to make clear to the German bourgeoisie, in the sharpest possible fashion, where real power lay, to dissipate their liberal illusions in the most violent manner, but to carry out those of their national demands which coincided with Prussian aspirations. Schleswig-Holstein provided the first pretext for action. The ground for his foreign policy was prepared. The Russian Tsar (Alexander II) was won over by Bismarck's services in the struggle to crush the insurgent Poles in 1863.<sup>39</sup> Louis-Napoleon was likewise mollified and could excuse his unconcern, if not his secret acquiescence, in Bismarck's plans by reference to his beloved "principle of nationality". Palmerston was Prime Minister of England but had appointed the puny Lord Russell to the Foreign Office only in order that the latter should make a fool of himself there. But Austria competed with Prussia for supremacy in Germany and could not afford to be outbidden by Prussia in this affair, especially as in 1850 and 1851 she had conducted herself even more contemptibly than Prussia as a lackey of

<sup>39</sup> The reference is to the Alvensleben Convention of February 1863 providing for joint operations against the insurgent Poles. For the more recent view that the Convention was a blunder rather than a piece of farsighted statesmanship, cf. W. N. Medlicott, *Bismarck and Modern Germany*, London 1965, pp. 35-36.

Tsar Nicholas in Schleswig-Holstein.<sup>40</sup> The situation was therefore extraordinarily favourable. No matter how much Austria resented Prussia, when Frederick VII, King of Denmark, died, they had no choice but to advance together against Denmark—with the tacit approval of France and Russia. As long as Europe remained neutral, which is what happened, the result was a foregone conclusion. The Duchies were conquered and surrendered at the peace treaty.<sup>41</sup>

Prussia had the subsidiary aim in this war of trying out its army, which had been trained on the basis of new principles since 1850, and strengthened and reorganised in 1860. It surpassed all expectations and that in the most varied conditions of war. The battle of Lyngby in Jutland demonstrated both the great superiority of the needle gun over the muzzle loader and that its correct use was understood, for 80 Prussians posted behind a hedge put more than three times their number of Danes to flight by their rapid fire. They were likewise able to observe that the Austrians had learned only one lesson from the Italian wars and the fighting methods of the French, namely that shooting was of no use whatever; the real soldier must charge at the enemy with the bayonet. This was duly noted, and indeed it was impossible to imagine a more welcome enemy tactic in front of the new guns. In order to demonstrate this to the Austrians at the earliest possible opportunity, the Duchies were assigned at the peace to the joint sovereignty of Austria and Prussia, thereby creating a purely provisional situation which was bound to produce one conflict after another, thus leaving Bismarck free to exploit any one of these conflicts in order to deliver his great blow against Austria. In line with the tradition of Prussian policy of ex-

<sup>40</sup> In the period 1848-1851, Austria had played a consistently pro-Danish rôle in the Schleswig-Holstein question.

<sup>41</sup> By the Treaty of Vienna of October 1864.

ploiting a favourable situation "ruthlessly and to the utmost", as Herr von Sybel puts it, it was only natural that under the pretext of liberating Germans from Danish oppression, 200,000 North Schleswig Danes were annexed to Germany. The man who was left empty-handed after all this was the Duke of Augustenburg, the candidate for Schleswig-Holstein supported by the petty states and by the German bourgeoisie.

In the matter of the Duchies, therefore, Bismarck had fulfilled the wishes of the German bourgeoisie against their will. He had driven out the Danes, he had defied the foreign Powers and these had not lifted a finger. But no sooner had the Duchies been freed, than they were treated as conquered territory; their wishes were not consulted and they were arbitrarily divided provisionally between Austria and Prussia. Prussia had become a Great Power again and was no longer the fifth wheel on the European wagon. The fulfilment of the national aspirations of the bourgeoisie was well under way, but the method chosen was not the liberal, bourgeois one. The Prussian military conflict therefore continued and even became more insoluble. The second act of Bismarck's spectacular drama had, therefore, to be begun.

The Danish war had fulfilled one part of the national aspirations. Schleswig-Holstein was "liberated". The Protocols of Warsaw and London, in which the Great Powers had put their seal on Germany's humiliation before Denmark,<sup>42</sup> were torn up and flung in their faces, and they had not done a thing. Austria and Prussia stood together once again; their troops had been victorious together and no potentate now thought of violating any part of German territory again. Louis-Napoleon's designs on the Rhine, rele-

<sup>42</sup> The two protocols of 1851 and 1852 regulated the succession in the Duchies in favour of the Danish ruling house.



gated to the background hitherto by preoccupations elsewhere—by the Italian Revolution, the Polish uprising, the Danish complications and finally by the campaign in Mexico<sup>48</sup>—were now without any possible hope of realisation. Externally, the world situation was thus just what a conservative Prussian statesman could desire. But up to 1871 Bismarck was never a conservative and least of all at that time, and the German bourgeoisie was by no means satisfied.

The German bourgeoisie continued to be caught up in the familiar contradiction; on the one hand it demanded exclusive political power, that is, a ministry elected from the liberal majority in Parliament; and such a ministry would have had to wage a ten year struggle with the old system represented by the Crown before its new ascendancy would have been definitively accepted; that would have meant ten years of internal weakness. On the other hand, it demanded a revolutionary transformation of Germany which, in practice, could only be achieved by force, that is, only by actual dictatorship. And from 1848 onwards, the bourgeoisie had demonstrated again and again, at every decisive moment, that it did not possess even a trace of the energy and determination needed to attain one or the other, let alone both these objectives. In politics there are only two decisive powers, the organised force of the State, the Army, and the unorganised, elemental force of the popular masses. How to appeal to the masses, the bourgeoisie had forgotten once and for all in 1848. It feared them even more than it feared

<sup>48</sup> Taking advantage of the American Civil War, Napoleon III launched an armed intervention against the Mexican government in 1861. In 1864 a Mexican "Empire" was established under Maximilian, brother of Francis Joseph of Austria. Soon after, the French troops were defeated by the Mexicans, and after the conclusion of the Civil War, the enterprise had to be abandoned. Maximilian refused to desert his supporters and was executed in 1867.

absolutism. The Army was not at their disposal by any means. But it was most certainly at Bismarck's.

In the conflict over the Constitution, which still raged, Bismarck had fought against the parliamentary demands of the bourgeoisie with all his might. But he longed most avidly to fulfil their national demands, for these coincided with the most secret and deeply felt aspirations of Prussian policy. If he could now fulfil the wishes of the bourgeoisie once again against its will, by making the unification of Germany as formulated by the bourgeoisie a reality, then the conflict would disappear of itself and Bismarck would become the idol of the bourgeois in the same way as his model Louis-Napoleon.

The bourgeoisie provided him with the aim; Louis-Napoleon showed him the way; only the actual execution was Bismarck's own work.

If Prussia was to achieve supremacy in Germany, it was necessary not only to drive Austria out of the German Confederation by force, but also to subjugate the petty states. Such a "brisk, jolly war"<sup>49</sup> of Germans against Germans had always been one of the main methods used by Prussia to expand its territory. No Prussian worth his salt shrank from such a thing. Neither could the second main method, an alliance with foreign powers against Germany, cause serious misgivings. Alexander, the sentimental Tsar of Russia, was in Prussia's pocket. Louis-Napoleon had never disputed Prussia's Piedmontese mission in Germany and was quite willing to do a deal with Bismarck. If he could get what he needed by peaceful means in the form of compensation, he preferred it that way. After all, he did not need to get the whole of the Left Bank of the Rhine at once. If he

<sup>49</sup> The German phrase is "frischer, fröhlicher Krieg", which was coined by the German historian Heinrich Leo in 1853, and caught on in subsequent years.

could get it piecemeal, even a strip at a time, for every new advance made by Prussia, it would be noticed less and still enable him to attain his goal. A square mile on the Rhine counted for far more in the eyes of the French chauvinists than the whole of Nice and Savoy. Negotiations were therefore opened with Louis-Napoleon, and his agreement secured for Prussia's expansion and for the establishment of a North German Confederation. There is no doubt whatsoever that stretches of territory on the Rhine were offered to Louis-Napoleon in exchange. In his negotiations with Govone, Bismarck mentioned the Rhenish possessions of Bavaria and Hesse. It is true that he denied this later, but a diplomat, especially a Prussian diplomat, has his own ideas as to the limits within which one is justified, or even obliged, to do violence to the truth. Truth, after all is like a woman and according to a Junker's idea, she really quite likes it.<sup>45</sup> Louis-Napoleon was not so stupid as to agree to Prussia's expansion unless he was promised some compensation. Bleichröder would sooner have lent money without interest. But he didn't know his Prussians well enough and he was outwitted in the end. In short, once Bismarck made sure of him he concluded an alliance with Italy in order to prepare the way for the "stab in the heart".

Philistines in many countries have been deeply affronted by this phrase. Quite wrongly. *À la guerre comme à la guerre*. It simply proves that Bismarck understood the German civil war of 1866<sup>46</sup> to be what it really was, namely, a

<sup>45</sup> Govone's reports were published in 1873, causing a sensation in the *Reichstag*. Bismarck angrily denied their truth, but most modern historians except doctrinaire believers in Bismarck's German-nationalist sentiments, agree as to their authenticity. Cf. E. Eyck, *Bismarck, Leben und Werk*, Zurich 1941-1944, II, pp. 218-221; O. Pflanze, *Bismarck and the Development of Germany*, pp. 294-295.

<sup>46</sup> All German states were involved in the Austro-Prussian War of 1866. The great majority took part on the side of Austria, while Mecklenburg, Oldenburg and a few other North German states took the side of Prussia.

*revolution*, and that he was prepared to carry it through by revolutionary means. And this is what he did. His treatment of the Federal Diet was revolutionary. Instead of subordinating himself to the constitutional decisions of the Federal authorities, he accused them of violating the Federal Constitution—a mere subterfuge—dissolved the Confederation, proclaimed a new Constitution with the aid of the Reichstag elected on the revolutionary basis of universal suffrage and finally drove the Federal Diet out of Frankfurt.<sup>47</sup> He sent a Hungarian Legion into Upper Silesia, which was commanded by General Klapka, who had participated in the Hungarian Revolution, and by other officers who had done likewise, and which consisted of Hungarian deserters and prisoners of war, who were now to make war on their own legitimate sovereign. After the conquest of Bohemia, Bismarck issued a proclamation, "To the inhabitants of the glorious kingdom of Bohemia", which was a real affront to the traditions of legitimacy.<sup>48</sup> At the peace he secured for Prussia the whole of the territory of three legitimate German Princes and of a Free City, and the expulsion of Princes who reigned "by the grace of God" no less than the King of Prussia, did not trouble his Christian and legitimist conscience in the least.<sup>49</sup> It was, in short, a thorough-going revolution carried out by revolutionary means. Naturally we are the last people to blame him for this. On the contrary, we blame him for not being revolutionary enough, for being a Prussian revolutionary from above, for beginning a whole revolution in a position in which he could only

<sup>47</sup> Prussia's military successes forced the Federal Diet to transfer itself to Augsburg and finally to disperse in August 1866.

<sup>48</sup> For Bismarck's encouragement of the revolutionary forces within the Habsburg Empire in the summer of 1866, cf. Pflanze, *op. cit.*, pp. 301-308.

<sup>49</sup> The annexation of Hanover, Hesse-Kassel, Nassau and Frankfurt to Prussia was decreed by a law of 1866.

carry through half a revolution, for being satisfied with four paltry petty states once he had embarked on the path of annexation.

## 6

But now in creeps little Napoleon demanding his due. While the war was raging he could have taken what he pleased on the Rhine, for not only was the country denuded of men but so also were the fortresses. He dallied in anticipation of a long drawn-out war which would exhaust both sides, but instead suffered the rude shock of Austria being subjugated in eight days. At first he demanded Rhenish-Bavaria and Rhenish Hessen along with Mainz, territories which Bismarck had mentioned to General Govone as possible compensation. But Bismarck was not now in a position to hand them over even if he had wanted to. The gigantic successes of the war had imposed new obligations on him. Prussia could not have agreed to barter away the key to the Middle Rhine, Mainz, to a foreign power at the very moment when it assumed the rôle of Germany's guardian and protector. Bismarck rejected the demand. Louis-Napoleon was prepared to be flexible. He now demanded only Luxemburg, Landau, Saarlouis and the Saarbrücken coal-mining area. But Bismarck was likewise unable to hand these over, the more so since Prussian territory was involved. Why had Louis-Napoleon not helped himself at the right time, when the Prussians were tied up in Bohemia? In short, nothing came of compensation for France. Bismarck knew that this would mean a war with France later on, but that was just what he wanted.

Prussia did not exploit her favourable position at the peace talks as ruthlessly as had been her custom when in

luck. And for good reasons. Saxony and Hessen-Darmstadt were brought into the new North German Confederation and were therefore treated leniently. Bavaria, Württemberg and Baden had to be treated gently because Bismarck had to conclude secret defensive treaties with them. And as far as Austria was concerned, had Bismarck not rendered her a service by destroying the traditional ties which bound her to Germany and Italy? Had he not really helped her to establish herself as an independent Great Power, a position she had sought to achieve for so long? Hadn't he known better than the Austrians themselves where their interests lay, when he beat them in Bohemia? Given correct treatment, must not Austria come to realise that the geographical situation, the mutual inter-locking of the two countries, made a Germany united by Prussia its natural and necessary ally?

This is how, for the first time in her existence, Prussia was able to surround herself with the aura of magnanimity: she used a sprat to catch a mackerel.

It was not only Austria which was beaten on the battlefields of Bohemia, but also the German bourgeoisie Bismarck had shown them that he knew better than they did themselves what suited them. A continuation of the conflict by the Chamber was now out of the question. The liberal demands of the bourgeoisie were put into cold storage for a long time, but their national demands were being fulfilled more and more every day. Bismarck carried out their national programme with a speed and precision which filled them with astonishment. And after he had brought home to them, *in corpore vili* (on their own vile bodies) their flabbiness and inertia and consequently their total incapacity to carry through their own programme, he assumed the mantle of magnanimity towards them and applied to the totally disarmed Chamber for indemnity in respect of his violations

of the Constitution. Moved to tears, the now harmless Progressives adopted the proposal.<sup>50</sup>

In spite of this, the bourgeoisie were reminded that they too had been defeated at Königgrätz.<sup>51</sup>

The Constitution of the North German Confederation was based on the model of the Prussian Constitution as authentically interpreted during the conflict. Refusal to pay taxes was made a crime. The Federal Chancellor and his ministers were nominated by the King of Prussia independently of any parliamentary majority. The independence of the Army from Parliament, secured as a result of the constitutional conflict, was retained in relation to the Reichstag. But the members of the Reichstag could console themselves for this by the uplifting thought that they had been elected by universal suffrage. They were also reminded of this fact—and in an unpleasant fashion—by the sight of two socialists (August Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht) sitting amongst them. This was the first time that socialist deputies, representatives of the proletariat, had ever appeared in Parliament. It was an ominous sign.

All this was unimportant at first. What mattered was to exploit and extend the new national unity, at least of the North, in the interests of the bourgeoisie and by so doing, to attract the South German bourgeoisie to the Federation. The Federal constitution transferred the economically most important concerns from the jurisdiction of the individual states to the Federation—common citizenship, and freedom of movement throughout the whole Federal area, rights of settlement, legislation concerning industry, trade tariffs, ship-

<sup>50</sup> The opposition liberals (Progressives) had lost substantially in the elections held while the Austro-Prussian War was still in progress. The Indemnity Bill was adopted in the Lower House on 3 September 1866 by 230 votes to 75.

<sup>51</sup> The decisive battle of Sadowa, fought on 3 July 1866, is usually referred to in German books as the battle of Königgrätz.

ping, coinage, weights and measures, railways, waterways, post and telegraph, patents, banks, foreign policy as a whole, consulates, protection of trade abroad, medical inspection, criminal law, judicial procedure, etc. All these matters were now speedily made the subject of, on the whole, liberal legislation. And so, at long, long last, the worst excrescences of *Kleinstaaterei* were finally eliminated: those which had been the main obstacles to capitalist development, on the one hand, and to Prussian ambitions on the other. But this was no world historical achievement, as proclaimed by the now chauvinistic bourgeoisie, but a very, very late and incomplete imitation of what the French Revolution had brought about seventy years earlier and what all other civilised states had introduced long ago. Instead of boasting, they ought to have been ashamed that "well educated" Germany was the very last in these respects.

Bismarck was most forthcoming to the bourgeoisie in economic matters during the whole period of the North German Confederation, and even with regard to questions of parliamentary powers he revealed the iron fist only in a velvet glove. It was his best period; one might, on occasions even have doubted his specific Prussian limitations, his inability to understand that there are other, more powerful forces in history than armies and diplomatic tricks based on them.

Bismarck not only knew that the peace with Austria foreshadowed war with France; he actually wanted it. This war was to be the means for completing the Prussian-German Empire, the task allocated to him by the German bourgeoisie.\* The attempts gradually to transform the Parlia-

\* Before the Austrian war, Bismarck, answering a Minister from one of the states who had attacked him on account of his demagogic German policy, said that in defiance of all phraseology, he would drive

ment of the Customs Union<sup>52</sup> into a Reichstag and thereby to draw the South German states more and more into the Confederation, founded on the firm resolution of the South German deputies: No extension of jurisdiction! The attitudes of the governments just beaten on the battlefield were no more favourable. Only a palpable new demonstration that Prussia was not only more powerful than they were, but powerful enough to protect them, that is, only a new all-German war could bring about their speedy capitulation. Moreover, the dividing line of the Main,<sup>53</sup> though secretly agreed in advance between Bismarck and Louis-Napoleon, nevertheless seemed to have been enforced on the Prussians by the latter; unification with Southern Germany was therefore a violation of the formally agreed right conceded to the French to keep Germany divided, in other words, a cause of war.

In the meantime, Louis-Napoleon had to see whether he could not find some stretch of territory on the German frontier which could serve him as compensation for Sadowa. Luxemburg had been excluded when the North German Confederation had been established; it was now, apart from the tie with Holland through the person of the Grand Duke,

Austria out of Germany and destroy the Confederation. "And do you think that the states will just look on and do nothing?" "You will do nothing at all!"—"Then what is to become of the Germans?" "I will take them to Paris and unite them there." (From a statement made in Paris before the Austrian war by the Minister concerned and published during the war in an article in the *Manchester Guardian* by its Paris correspondent, Mrs. Crawford.)

<sup>52</sup> The *Zollverein* was reorganised after the war of 1866, and a *Zollparlament* was established as its highest organ. Bismarck hoped to achieve closer union with the South German states by gradually increasing the jurisdiction of this parliament. His hopes were frustrated by the electoral successes of the anti-Prussian parties in these states in 1867 and 1868.

<sup>53</sup> The frontier between the North German Confederation and the South German states is referred to in German books as the *Mainlinie*.

an independent state. It was just about as French in character and outlook as Alsace and had far greater inclination to France than to the Prussians, who were positively hated.

Luxemburg is a most striking example of what the political *malaise* of Germany since the Middle Ages has done to the people inhabiting the Franco-German frontier areas, and it is all the more striking, since Luxemburg nominally belonged to Germany until 1866. Until 1830 it consisted of a German and a French half, but the German half soon succumbed to the superior French culture. The Luxemburg Emperors<sup>54</sup> were French in speech and education. Like the other Low Countries, Luxemburg had remained in only nominal union with Germany from the time of its incorporation into the Burgundian countries in 1440, and its membership of the German Confederation in 1815 did nothing to alter this. After 1830, the French part and a considerable portion of the German part went to Belgium. But in the remaining German Luxemburg, everything remained French, the courts, the authorities, the Legislative Chamber, all conducted their business in French; all public and private documents and commercial records were written in French, all secondary schools taught in French. The speech of the educated people was and remained French, a French, of course, which groaned and creaked under the weight of the High-German sound-shift. In short, two languages were spoken in Luxemburg, a popular Rhine-Frankish dialect and French, but High-German remained a foreign language. The Prussian garrison stationed in the capital made matters worse rather than better. This is shameful enough for Germany but it is true. And this voluntary gallicisation of Luxemburg, moreover, puts similar developments in Alsace and in German-Lorraine in their proper light.

<sup>54</sup> The heads of the Luxemburg dynasty were elected Holy Roman Emperors with short interruptions from 1310 to 1437.

The King of Holland, William III, sovereign Duke of Luxemburg, was very much in need of ready cash and was quite amenable to offers made by Louis-Napoleon to buy the Duchy. The Luxemburgers would have given unconditional support to incorporation into France. Proof of this was their attitude in the war of 1870. From the point of view of international law, Prussia had no grounds to object, for she had herself brought about the exclusion of Luxemburg from Germany. Her troops were stationed in the capital as the federal garrison of a German Federal fortress. As soon as Luxemburg ceased to be a Federal fortress, Prussian troops no longer had any right to remain there. Why then did they not return home? Why was Bismarck unable to agree to the annexation?

Simply because the contradictions in which he had tied himself now came into the open. *Before* 1866, Germany was simply a territory for annexation by Prussia, which had to be shared with foreign Powers. *After* 1866, Germany had become a Prussian *protectorate* to be defended from foreign depredations. True, whole slices of Germany had been excluded from the newly created so-called Germany, in deference to Prussian interests. But the right of the German nation to its own territory now imposed on the Prussian Crown the duty of preventing these parts of the old Confederation from being incorporated into foreign states, of keeping open the possibility of their joining the new Prussian-German state in the future. This is why Italy stopped short at the frontier of Tyrol.<sup>55</sup> This is why Luxemburg could not be handed over to Louis-Napoleon. A truly revolutionary government could have proclaimed this quite openly. But not the Royal Prussian revolutionary who had finally managed to convert Germany into one of Metternich's "geo-

<sup>55</sup> Prussia had refused in 1866 to accede to Italian demands for the cession of Tyrol as well as Venetia.

graphical concepts". He had put himself in the wrong from the point of view of international law and could only extricate himself by applying his favourite officer's mess interpretation of international law.

That he was not laughed out of court for all this was due only to the fact that Louis-Napoleon was far from ready for a large-scale war in the spring of 1867. An agreement was reached at the London Conference. The Prussians evacuated Luxemburg; the fortress was dismantled, the Duchy was declared neutral.<sup>56</sup> War was postponed once again.

But Louis-Napoleon could not be satisfied with this. The expansion of Prussian power was quite acceptable to him as long as he received a corresponding compensation on the Rhine. He would have been satisfied with very little, prepared to take even less, but he had received nothing at all, had been utterly cheated. A Bonapartist monarchy in France was, however, only possible if its frontiers were gradually advanced towards the Rhine and if France remained the arbiter of Europe, if not in actual fact at least in appearance. The advance of the frontiers had come to grief; the position of arbiter was already threatened. The Bonapartist press was calling loudly for revenge for Sadowa. If Louis-Napoleon wanted to save his throne he had to remain true to his rôle and to secure by force what he had been unable to secure by persuasion, in spite of all his good services.

Hectic preparations, therefore, diplomatic as well as military, on both sides. And in fact, the following diplomatic developments resulted:

Spain was looking for a candidate for the throne. In

<sup>56</sup> The London Conference took place under the presidency of the English Foreign Secretary in May 1867. Luxemburg's neutrality was guaranteed by the countries represented, i.e. Austria, Russia, Prussia, France, Italy, Great Britain, Holland, Belgium and Luxemburg.

March 1869, Benedetti, the French envoy in Berlin, heard a rumour that the throne was being offered to Prince Leopold von Hohenzollern. He received instructions from Paris to make further enquiries. Von Thile, the Under-Secretary of State, assured him on his word of honour that the Prussian Government knew nothing about it. Benedetti heard the Emperor's view on a visit to Paris, "this choice of candidate is essentially anti-national, the country will not stand for it; it must be prevented."

All this, incidentally, revealed that Louis-Napoleon was fast losing his grip. For what could indeed be a more satisfactory "revenge for Sadowa" than having a Prussian Prince on the Spanish throne—the troubles which were bound to follow, the involvement of Prussia in internal Spanish politics, perhaps even a war, a defeat for the tiny Prussian navy, in any case Prussia in a most grotesque situation in front of Europe? But Louis-Napoleon could no longer permit himself the luxury of such a spectacle. His credit was so exhausted that he felt himself bound to adopt the traditional standpoint—namely, that a German Prince on the Spanish throne would mean that France was menaced from two sides and could not therefore be tolerated—an attitude which had become childish and untenable since 1830.

Benedetti therefore called on Bismarck (on 11 May 1869) in order to seek more information and to make France's attitude clear to him. He did not find out anything very definite from Bismarck; but Bismarck most certainly learned from Benedetti what he wanted to know, namely that proposing Leopold as a candidate would mean immediate war with France. Thus Bismarck was in a position where he could let war break out whenever it suited him.

As was to be expected, Leopold's candidature was heard of again in July 1870 and led to war directly, despite Louis-Napoleon's efforts to avert it. He realised not only that he

had walked into a trap, but that his own throne was at stake, and he had little confidence in the veracity of his Bonapartist advisers who assured him that everything was ready down to the last brass button, and even less in their administrative capacity. But the logical consequences of his own past drove him to destruction; his own vacillations served only to accelerate his doom.

Bismarck, on the other hand, was not only absolutely prepared in the military sense, but this time he really had the people behind him, who beneath all the diplomatic lies uttered on both sides grasped one simple fact: that this was a war not simply for the Rhine, but for their national existence. For the first time since 1815, reservists and the *Landwehr* (territorial reserves) again flocked to the colours gladly and enthusiastically. It was immaterial now, how all this had come about, or which small area of the two-thousand year old national inheritance had or had not been promised to Louis-Napoleon by Bismarck off his own bat. What was necessary was to show foreign powers once and for all that they were not to interfere in Germany's internal affairs, and that Germany was not obliged to support Louis-Napoleon's shaky throne by ceding German territory. And in the face of this national upsurge, all class differences, all ambitions for a new Confederation of the Rhine animating the South German courts, all restoration attempts of expelled Princes vanished into thin air.

Both sides had sought alliances. Louis-Napoleon had the firm support of Austria and Denmark and the fairly certain support of Italy. Bismarck had Russia on his side. But Austria, as usual, was not ready and was unable to intervene effectively before 2 September, and on that day Louis-Napoleon had already been captured by the Germans, and Russia had warned Austria that if she attacked Prussia she in turn would be attacked by Russia. But it was in Italy

that Louis-Napoleon's double-dealing policies came home to roost. He had sought both to advance Italian national unity and to protect the Pope from it at one and the same time. He had kept troops in Rome that were now needed at home but which nevertheless he could not withdraw without obliging Italy to respect Rome and acknowledge the Pope as a sovereign ruler; all of which prevented Italy from standing by him. And finally, Denmark was ordered by Russia to remain passive.

But more decisive than all the diplomatic exchanges for the localisation of the war were the swift blows of the German army from Spichern and Wörth to Sedan. Louis-Napoleon's troops were defeated in every battle, and finally some three-quarters of them were sent off to Germany as prisoners of war. This was not the fault of the soldiers, who fought bravely enough, but of the military leaders and of the Government. But if, like Louis-Napoleon, you establish an empire with the aid of a gang of hooligans, and if this empire is maintained for eighteen years by handing over France to be exploited by this gang, if all the important positions in the state are likewise occupied by members of this gang and all the subordinate ones by their hangers-on, then you should not embark on a life and death struggle, if you do not want to be left in the lurch. In less than five weeks the whole fabric of the Empire, so long admired by all European philistines, collapsed. The Revolution of 4 September,<sup>57</sup> simply cleared away the refuse, and Bismarck, who went into the war to found a Little-German Empire, woke up one fine morning to find himself the founder of a French Republic.

According to Bismarck's own proclamation, the war was

<sup>57</sup> The news of Napoleon's defeat at Sedan produced an uprising in Paris on 4 September 1870, in the course of which the Republic was proclaimed and a Government of National Resistance set up, headed by the commander of the Paris garrison, Trochu.

not waged against the French people but against Louis-Napoleon. All justification for the war disappeared with his overthrow. This was the illusion held by the otherwise not so naïve Government established on 4 September, and they were most amazed when Bismarck suddenly revealed his Prussian Junker side.

There are no greater Francophobes in the world than the Prussian Junkers. For not only had they, who had been immune from payment of taxes before, suffered badly from 1806 to 1813 because of the punishment which the French were able to inflict on them as a result of their own backwardness; but much worse was the fact that the godless French by their outrageous revolution had so turned people's heads that the old Junker domination was more or less finished with even in Prussia, that the poor Junkers had to wage a fierce struggle, year in year out, to retain what little was left of their position, and a large number of them had already been reduced to the level of a shabby, parasitic aristocracy. Revenge had to be taken on France for this, and that is what the Junker officers in the army did under Bismarck's instigation. Lists had been drawn up of the French contributions imposed on this basis, calculations were made as to what each Department was to be made to pay—naturally taking France's greater wealth into account. Food, fodder, footwear were requisitioned with conspicuous ruthlessness. The mayor of one of the towns in the Ardennes, who declared that he was unable to make the required deliveries, was given 25 strokes without more ado. The Paris Government published all the evidence about this. The *Francs-Tireurs* who operated so precisely according to the principles of the Prussian *Landsturm* decree of 1813<sup>58</sup> as to

<sup>58</sup> This decree of April 1813 provided for the organisation of volunteer battalions without uniform, who were to carry out guerrilla activities behind Napoleon's lines.



give the impression that they had closely studied them, were shot out of hand, without mercy, when captured. The stories about the sending back of chiming clocks to Germany are likewise true; the *Kölnische Zeitung* itself reported on this. But according to Prussian accounts, these clocks were not stolen but discovered in houses near Paris the owners of which had fled, and were therefore classified as unclaimed property, and annexed for the benefit of loved ones at home. Thus, under Bismarck's leadership, the Junkers saw to it that despite the unobjectionable behaviour of the troops as well as of the greater part of the officers, the specifically Prussian character of the war was impressed upon the French, who naturally held the entire army responsible for the petty acts of spite of the Junkers.

And yet, these same Junkers were to demonstrate their respect for the French people in a fashion unheard of in all previous history. When all attempts to relieve Paris had failed, when all the French armies had been driven back, when Bourbaki's last big offensive against the German communication lines had been driven back, when the diplomacy of Europe had left France to its fate, then starving Paris had at last to capitulate.<sup>59</sup> And the Junkers' hearts beat more quickly at the thought of marching in triumph into the godless nest and wreaking full vengeance on the Parisian archrebels, the full vengeance denied them by Alexander of Russia in 1814 and by Wellington in 1815. Now they could punish the hearth and home of the Revolution to their heart's desire.

Paris surrendered. It paid 200 millions indemnity. Its fortifications were handed over to the Prussians. The garrison laid down its arms and handed over its field artillery. The cannon defending the city walls had their gun carriages

<sup>59</sup> The Government of National Resistance concluded an armistice and agreed to the surrender of Paris on 28 January 1871.

taken away. All defensive weapons belonging to the State were handed over, one by one. But the real defenders of Paris, the National Guard, the Parisian people in arms, remained untouched, for nobody thought of taking away their weapons, neither their rifles nor their cannon.\* And in order to show the whole world that the victorious Germans had come to a respectful halt before the armed people of Paris, the victors did not enter Paris but were content to occupy the Champs-Élysées, a public park, for three days, guarded, watched and surrounded by Parisian sentries. Not a single German soldier set foot in the Paris Town Hall. None walked the boulevards, and the two who were allowed into the Louvre to admire the works of art had to obtain permission to do so, for it was a breach of the surrender terms. France was defeated, Paris was starving, but its people, as a result of their glorious past, had ensured *this* respect for themselves at least, that no victor dared to suggest that they disarm; none had the temerity to visit them in their homes or to desecrate the streets, battleground of so many revolutions, by a triumphal parade. It was as if the newly-baked Emperor, William I, were raising his hat to the living revolutionaries of Paris just as his late brother had done to the fallen fighters of the March struggles of 1848 in Berlin, and as if the entire German army stood behind him with arms presented.

But this was the only concession which Bismarck was compelled to make. Under the plea that there was no French Government with which peace could be made—a statement as true and as false on 4 September as it was on 28 January—he made the utmost use of his success in the true Prus-

\* These were the property of the National Guard and not of the State and were therefore not handed over to the Prussians. It was these weapons that Thiers ordered to be stolen from the people of Paris in March 1871, and as a result of this, the uprising began which led to the establishment of the Commune.

sian manner and only declared himself ready for peace talks after the complete overthrow of France. In the Peace Treaty itself, the "favourable situation was ruthlessly exploited" in the same good old Prussian style. Not only was the unheard of sum of 5 milliard Francs extorted as war indemnity, but two provinces, Alsace and Lorraine, along with Metz and Strassburg, were taken from France and incorporated into Germany.<sup>60</sup> With these annexations, Bismarck appears as an independent politician for the first time, who no longer carried out in his own way a programme prescribed by others, but as one who translated the products of his own brain into action. And, as a result, he committed his first, colossal blunder.

Alsace was conquered by France mainly in the Thirty Years War. With this, Richelieu departed from Henry IV's dictum:

The Spanish tongue may belong to the Spaniards, the German to the Germans, but wherever French is spoken, that belongs to me;

and in so doing he was basing himself on the principle of the natural frontier of the Rhine, the historical frontier of Ancient Gaul. This was stupid, but the Empire, which included the French-speaking areas of Lorraine and Belgium as well as Franche-Comté was in no position to blame France for annexing German-speaking areas. And if Louis XIV annexed Strassburg in peace-time with the aid of a pro-French party in the town,<sup>61</sup> Prussia has no real cause for indignation, for in 1796 it tried to do exactly the same kind of thing by seeking, though unsuccessfully, to occupy the

<sup>60</sup> A preliminary peace was signed on 26 February 1871, and the final Peace of Frankfurt concluded on 10 May 1871.

<sup>61</sup> Louis XIV annexed Strassburg in 1681 with the active collaboration of the Catholic party headed by Bishop Fürstenberg.

Free Imperial City of Nuremberg without having been invited by any pro-Prussian party in the town.\*

As a result of the Peace of Vienna in 1735, Lorraine was traded to France by Austria, and was finally taken into complete French possession in 1766.<sup>62</sup> For centuries it had belonged only nominally to the German Empire; its Dukes were French in every way and were almost always bound to France by alliances.

Up to the time of the French Revolution, a number of petty principalities existed in the Vosges whose rulers regarded themselves as sovereign princes in relation to the German Empire but acknowledged French sovereignty. This

\* Louis XIV was attacked on the grounds that his *Chambres de Reunion* had seized German territory which did not belong to him in peace time. Prussia's most malignant enemies could never make a similar charge against her. On the contrary. After she had made a separate peace with France in 1795 in direct violation of the Imperial Constitution and had assembled her small, equally rebellious neighbours around herself behind the demarcation line of the first North-German Confederation, she utilised the desperate situation of the South-German Estates—the only ones continuing the war in alliance with Austria—in order to attempt annexations in Franconia. They established "Chambers of Reunion" in Ansbach and Bayreuth, (which belonged to Prussia at that time) modelled on those set up by Louis XIV, and advanced claims on a number of neighbouring areas, compared to which Louis' legal pretexts were absolutely convincing. And when the Germans, defeated, withdrew, and the French marched into Franconia, the rescuing Prussians occupied the Nuremberg area, including the suburbs right up to the town walls, and extorted a treaty from the trembling Nuremberg burghers (2 September 1796) according to which the town accepted Prussian domination on one condition—that Jews should never be allowed within the town precincts. Archduke Charles advanced again very soon after, defeated the French near Würzburg on 3 and 4 September 1796 and as a result, Prussia's attempt to impress the Nurembergers with Prussia's German mission faded into thin air.

<sup>62</sup> The treaty of 1735 provided for a manifold re-allocation of territories, including the transference of Francis, Duke of Lorraine to Tuscany whose Medici rulers had died out, and of the defeated Polish king Stanislas Leszinsky to Lorraine, subject to the reversion of the Duchy to France on the latter's death, which occurred in 1766.

dual position was advantageous to them. And if the German Empire tolerated this situation instead of calling the sovereign gentlemen to account, then it had no reason to complain when France, in view of its sovereignty, took the inhabitants of these areas under its protection against the expelled dynasts.

Up to the time of the French Revolution, this German area was, on the whole, hardly gallicised at all. German was the language used in the schools and was the official language for all internal matters, in Alsace at least. The French Government favoured the German provinces, which, after long years of war devastation saw no more enemies in the land after the beginning of the eighteenth century. The Empire, torn by perpetual internal conflicts, was not really in any position to tempt the Alsations to return to the motherland. The people enjoyed peace and quiet at any rate. One knew where one stood, and so the most influential philistines submitted to God's inscrutable wisdom. After all, their fate was not unique; the people of Holstein were also under foreign, namely Danish, occupation.

Then came the French Revolution. What Alsace and Lorraine had never dared to hope for from Germany was presented to them by France. The feudal chains were broken. The subject peasant, obliged to perform servile labour, now became a free man, the free owner in many cases of his farm and fields. In the towns, patrician domination and guild privileges disappeared. The aristocracy were driven out. And in the areas where petty princes had held sway, the peasants followed the example of their neighbours; they expelled the dynasties, the local authorities and the nobles, and declared themselves free French citizens. And nowhere in France did the people rally so enthusiastically to the Revolution as they did in the German-speaking areas. And when the Empire declared war on the Revolution, when the Ger-

mans not only still obediently wore their own chains, but also allowed themselves to be used to impose the old slavery on the French and the recently overthrown feudal lords on the peasants of Alsace, then the people of Alsace and Lorraine ceased to consider themselves German. They now learned to hate and despise the Germans, and the *Marseillaise* was written and set to music in Strassburg and was first sung by the people of Alsace. The German-French were now forged into one nation with the national French, with whom they fought side by side for the Revolution on hundreds of battlefields.

Has not the Great Revolution worked the same miracle in the Flemish areas around Dunkirk, amongst the Celts of Brittany, amongst the Italians of Corsica? And if we complain of the fact that this happened to Germans too, then have we forgotten all our past history which has made this possible? Have we forgotten that the whole of the Left Bank of the Rhine, which played only a passive part in the Revolution, was French in outlook when the Germans marched in again in 1814, and remained so until 1848, when the Revolution of that year again rehabilitated the Germans in the eyes of the Rhinelanders? Have we forgotten that Heine's enthusiasm for the French and even his Bonapartism were simply a reflection of the general outlook of the people west of the Rhine?

In 1814, when the allied forces invaded France, it was precisely in Alsace and German Lorraine that they met the most powerful hostility, the fiercest popular resistance, because it was in these places that the people were afraid of the danger of being forced to become Germans again. And this despite the fact that German was practically the only language spoken there at the time. But once the danger of being separated from France had passed, once the urge for annexation on the part of the romantic German Chauvins

had been suppressed, then the need for greater linguistic integration with France was understood, and from that time on the schools were gallicised, which the Luxemburgers had also done voluntarily. Nevertheless, the conversion proceeded very slowly. Only the present generation of the bourgeoisie is really gallicised, while the workers and peasants speak German. The position is roughly similar to that existing in Luxemburg. Literary German (with the partial exception of the pulpit) has been superseded by French, but the popular German dialect has only lost ground near the linguistic border, and is used colloquially much more than in many parts of Germany.

This was the land which Bismarck and the Prussian Junkers sought to make German once again, supported by that revival of chauvinistic romanticism which appears to be inseparable from all German questions. To try to make Strassburg, the home of the *Marseillaise*, German, was just as stupid as to try to make Nice, the home of Garibaldi, French. But Louis-Napoleon at least observed the proprieties in Nice and permitted a plebiscite to be taken on the question of the annexation; and the manoeuvre succeeded. But quite apart from the fact that the Prussians for very good reasons abhorred the use of such revolutionary measures—for nowhere has the majority of the people ever asked to be annexed to Prussia—they knew only too well that the population was even more solidly for France than the French-speaking French. And so the *coup* was carried out simply by the use of force. It was an act of revenge against the French Revolution. One of the territories which had been integrated with France precisely through the Revolution was torn away.

But the annexation nevertheless fulfilled a military purpose. By acquiring Metz and Strassburg, Germany came into possession of a defence line of enormous strength. As long

as Belgium and Switzerland remain neutral, a French attack in force cannot be initiated anywhere else but in the small area between Metz and the Vosges, and to meet it, Coblenz, Metz, Strassburg and Mainz constitute the largest and strongest quadrilateral of fortresses in the world. But half of this quadrilateral, like that of Austria in Lombardy,<sup>63</sup> lies in enemy territory and serves as strongholds for holding down the local population. Moreover, in order to complete the chain of defences, it was necessary to extend them beyond the German-speaking area and to annex a quarter of a million French people.

The great strategic advantage is thus the only justification for the annexation. But can this gain be compared in any way with the harm which the Germans did to themselves by this annexation?

The Prussian Junkers were blind to the great moral disadvantage in which the young German Empire placed itself by openly and frankly declaring brute force as its basic principle. On the contrary, unwilling subjects kept down by force are a necessity for them, as a proof of increased Prussian power and, generally, they have never had any other kind of subjects.

But even the Junkers should not have been blind to the political consequences of the annexation. And these were quite clear. Even before the annexation had been ratified, Marx proclaimed to the whole world in a circular of the International: "*The annexation of Alsace and Lorraine makes Russia the arbiter of Europe.*"<sup>64</sup> And the Social-Democrats repeated this again and again from the tribune of the Reichstag, so often that in the end the truth of this statement was finally demonstrated by Bismarck himself in

<sup>63</sup> Engels is referring to the quadrilateral of fortresses formed by Mantua, Verona, Legnano and Peschiera.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. Marx, Engels, *Werke*, XVII, pp. 271-279.

his speech to the Reichstag on 6 February 1888 in which he cringed before the almighty Tsar, the arbiter of peace and war.

For it was crystal clear. By seizing two of the most fanatically patriotic provinces from France, the French were driven straight into the arms of anyone who offered them hope of getting these provinces back again and France was converted into the eternal enemy. Bismarck, who was a worthy and conscientious representative of the German philistines in this matter, demanded that the French should renounce not only legal but also moral claims to Alsace and Lorraine, and that they should even rejoice that these two parts of revolutionary France had been "returned to their ancient fatherland", with which they wanted to have nothing whatever to do. But unfortunately the French are not going to do this, just as the Germans during the Napoleonic wars did not renounce their moral claim to the Left Bank of the Rhine, though the people in this area at that time did not have any strong desire to return to Germany. As long as the people of Alsace and Lorraine yearn to return to France, so long France must and will strive to secure the return of these areas, and she will try to find the means to do so, including allies. And her natural ally against Germany is Russia.

If the two biggest and strongest nations in Western Europe neutralise one another by their mutual hostility, if there is an eternal bone of contention between them which incites them to war on one another, then the only country which profits from this is Russia, whose hands are all the freer as a consequence: Russia, whose own expansionist aims Germany is the less able to counter, the more Russia can rely on unconditional support from France. And was it not Bismarck who put France in the position of having to beg Russia for an alliance, of having to agree to the surrender of Constantinople to Russia if the latter would only support her in the

matter of her lost provinces? And if despite this, peace has been maintained for seventeen years, what other reason is there for this than the system of conscription introduced in both Russia and France, which requires sixteen or, with the most recent variation of it, even twenty-five years in order to provide a full muster of properly trained annual levies? And now that the annexation has dominated all European politics for seventeen years, is it not at this moment the fundamental cause of the crisis which threatens the whole continent with war? Remove this one fact and peace is assured.

The Alsace bourgeois who speaks French with a German accent, this hybrid coxcomb who gives the appearance of being more French than any real Frenchman, who looks down on Goethe and raves about Racine, but who nevertheless cannot rid himself of the guilty conscience of his crypto-Germanity and who, precisely because of this, must boast of his contempt for all things German, so much so that he is not even capable of acting as intermediary between France and Germany—this Alsace bourgeois is, to be sure, a contemptible fellow, whether he is a Mulhouse manufacturer or a Paris journalist.

But what made him what he is? What else but German history over the past three hundred years? And was it not the case until very recently that nearly all Germans abroad, especially the businessmen, were true "Alsations" who denied their German origin, who really tortured themselves into assuming the nationality of their new homeland and, as a consequence, made themselves just as ridiculous as those citizens of Alsace who were more or less compelled to do the same thing by their circumstances? In England for example, nearly all the immigrant German merchants between 1815 and 1840 were anglicised, spoke almost only English even among themselves; even to-day, you can see various old

German philistines on the Manchester Stock Exchange, for instance, who would give half their fortunes to be able to pass as real Englishmen. This has changed only since 1848, and from 1870 onwards even German lieutenants of reserve visit England, and Berlin sends its contingent. As a result, the former servility has been replaced by a Prussian arrogance, which makes us Germans abroad no less ridiculous.

Has the unification of Alsace with Germany perhaps become more acceptable to the people of Alsace since 1871? On the contrary. They have been subjected to a dictatorship, while next door, in France, there is a Republic. The officious, pedantic Prussian *Landrat* system has been introduced, compared with which the execrated French prefectural system—strictly regulated by law—seems perfection. The last remnants of freedom of the press, assembly and organisation were quickly eliminated. Recalcitrant city councils have been dissolved and replaced by German bureaucrats acting as mayors. The “notabilities” on the other hand, that is, the completely gallicised aristocrats and bourgeois, were flattered and protected in their exploitation of the peasants and workers who, though by no means pro-German, nevertheless speak the German language and are the only elements to whom a policy of reconciliation might have appealed. And what was the result of all this? Simply that in February 1887, when all Germany let itself be intimidated into giving the Bismarck *Kartell* a majority in the Reichstag,<sup>68</sup> Alsace and Lorraine voted for out-and-out supporters of France and rejected anyone who was suspected of even the slightest sympathy for Germany.

So if the people of Alsace are what they are, have we the

<sup>68</sup>The *Kartell* consisted of the Free Conservatives and National Liberals, who won the 1887 elections in a campaign in which the danger of a war of revenge by France was deliberately and grossly exaggerated.

right to be angry about it? By no means. Their resistance to the annexation is a historical fact, which cannot be denied but which needs to be explained. And in this connection we must ask ourselves: How many and how great were the historical sins which Germany had to commit to bring about such an attitude in Alsace? And how must our new German Empire appear to the outside world if, after seventeen years of attempted germanisation, the people of Alsace unanimously shout, “Spare us that!”? Have we the right to delude ourselves that two successful campaigns and seventeen years of Bismarckian dictatorship can suffice to undo all the effects of three hundred years of ignominious history?

## 7

Bismarck had reached his goal. His new German-Prussian monarchy was publicly proclaimed in Versailles in the luxurious state apartments of Louis XIV. France lay defenceless at his feet. Defiant Paris, which he himself had not dared to touch, was provoked into the rising of the Commune by Thiers and then subjugated by returning prisoners of war, soldiers of the ex-Emperor's army. All the philistines of Europe gazed at Bismarck in awe, in the same way as he had gazed at his model, Louis-Napoleon, in the 'fifties. With Russian assistance, Germany had become the most powerful state in Europe, and all power in Germany was in the hands of Bismarck the dictator. The question now was: what would he do with his power? If until then he had carried out the unification plans of the bourgeoisie, though not by bourgeois but by Bonapartist methods, this matter was now fairly settled. It was now necessary to make his own plans and to show what ideas he could produce him-

self. And these would reveal themselves in the course of the internal construction of the new Empire.

German society is made up of big landowners, peasants, bourgeois, petty-bourgeois and workers.

Landed property is in the hands of a few magnates (especially in Silesia) and a large number of medium-sized landowners, who are most numerous in the old Prussian provinces east of the Elbe. It is these Prussian Junkers who more or less dominate the whole landowning class. They are farmers themselves, in so far as their lands are cultivated under the direction of stewards, and they are often enough also owners of distilleries and sugar-beet factories. Their lands are generally settled in the family through entail. The younger sons go into the army or the civil service, so that this petty landowning aristocracy is linked with an even smaller aristocracy of officers and officials, an aristocracy which is constantly increased by the acquisition of noble status by many of the bourgeois higher-ranking officers and officials. In the lower reaches of this whole aristocratic connection, there exists naturally a numerous parasitic aristocracy, an aristocratic *lumpen* proletariat, which lives on its debts, its dubious enterprises, beggary and political espionage.

All these constitute the Prussian Junker class and they are one of the main bulwarks of the old Prussian State. But the landowning core of the Junker class are in a quite weak position. The obligation to live according to their status becomes more and more expensive every day; supporting younger sons until they have passed their military or civil service examinations, maintaining daughters until they marry, all this costs money; and since these take priority over all other considerations, it is no wonder that incomes do not suffice, that debts must be contracted, or even mortgages taken out. In short, the whole Junker class is always on

the brink of financial disaster; every misfortune, whether it be a war, a harvest failure or a trade crisis, threatens them with disaster, and it is therefore no accident that for a century they have been saved from destruction only by state assistance of various kinds, and that in fact they only continue to exist by means of state aid. This quite artificially maintained class is doomed to extinction. No state aid can keep it alive indefinitely. But with it, the old Prussian State will also disappear.

*The peasants* are not a very active political element. If the peasant owns his own land, his condition deteriorates more and more by the disadvantageous conditions of production facing the small farmer, deprived of the old communal mark or common pasture, without which there is no grazing ground for his cattle. If he is a tenant-farmer, his position is even worse. The small farm presupposes a predominantly natural economy (i.e. living off the produce); it is ruined by a money economy. This is the reason for the small farmer's indebtedness, for his mass expropriation by the holders of mortgages, and for his recourse to domestic industry in order not to be driven from the soil altogether. Politically, the peasantry are either indifferent or reactionary. They are ultramontane (Right-Wing Catholic) in the Rhineland, because of the old hatred of Prussia. In other areas they are particularist or Protestant-Conservative. Religious feelings still serve this class as an expression of social or political interests.

We have already dealt with *the bourgeoisie*. It has enjoyed an unprecedented economic upsurge since 1848. Germany had an ever-increasing share in the colossal expansion which followed the commercial crisis of 1847—an expansion caused by the appearance in this period of oceanic steamship transportation, by the enormous expansion of the railways, and by the gold discoveries in Australia and Cali-

fornia. It was precisely its drive for the elimination of the obstacles to trade imposed by the petty states, and for a position on the world market equal to that of its competitors, that set Bismarck's revolution in motion. Now, with the French milliards flooding into Germany, a new period of feverish industrial activity was opening up for the bourgeoisie, one in which Germany revealed itself to be a great industrial nation for the first time, by being involved in a German national economic crash.<sup>66</sup> The bourgeoisie was already the most powerful class economically, and the Government had to defer to its economic interests. The revolution of 1848 had transformed the state into an outwardly constitutional form in which the bourgeoisie could establish and extend its political domination. Despite this, the bourgeoisie was still far from exercising real political power. In the constitutional conflict of the 'sixties, they had not been successful against Bismarck. The elimination of the conflict as a result of the revolutionising of Germany from above had further taught the bourgeoisie that the executive power was, at most, dependent on them only very indirectly, that they could neither appoint nor dismiss ministers, nor control the army. In addition, they were cowardly and flabby in face of an energetic executive power, but then so were the Junkers; the bourgeoisie had more excuse, for they were involved in direct economic conflict with the revolutionary industrial working class. What was certain, however, was that they had gradually to destroy the Junkers economically and that they were the only section of the propertied classes who had any hope of a future.

*The petty-bourgeoisie* consisted firstly of remnants of the medieval crafts more prevalent in Germany than in the rest

<sup>66</sup> The financial collapse of 1873 ended the period of feverish speculation and unsound investments, stimulated by the "French milliards", and known in German history as the *Gründerzeit*.

of Western Europe because of Germany's long standing backwardness; secondly, of bourgeois whose fortunes had declined; thirdly, of elements, previously propertyless, who had risen to become small traders. With the expansion of large-scale industry, the existence of the whole of the petty bourgeoisie lost all semblance of stability. Changes of occupation, periodic bankruptcies, became the rule. This class, formerly so stable, which had been the élite corps of German philistinism, sank from its former contentment and passivity, its piety, subordination and respectability, into general disintegration and discontent with the fate which God had ordained for it. The remnants of the artisans demanded the re-establishment of guild privileges; of the others, one section became mildly democratic and "progressive" in outlook;<sup>67</sup> the other even drew close to the Social Democrats, some virtually joining the labour movement.

Finally, *the workers*. Of the agricultural labourers at least those in Eastern Germany still lived in semi-serfdom and were therefore politically of no account. On the other hand, the Social Democrats had made rapid advances amongst the urban working class, and grew in the measure that large-scale industry proletarianised the mass of the people and consequently exacerbated the class contradictions between capitalists and workers. Although the Social Democratic workers were still split into two mutually hostile parties,<sup>68</sup> the main difference between them had, on the whole, dis-

<sup>67</sup> The minority liberals who refused to "indemnify" Bismarck for his violation of the constitution in 1866 continued to use the name "Progressive Party". In 1884 they united with the left wing of the National Liberals to form the *Deutschfreisinnige Partei*.

<sup>68</sup> The two parties were the *Allgemeine Deutsche Arbeiterverein*, founded by Lassalle in 1863, and deriving most of its support from the workers of Berlin, and the *Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei*, founded at the Eisenach congress in 1869, based mainly on Saxony, whose leaders, Bebel and Liebknecht, kept in close touch with Marx and Engels and the International Working Men's Association.



appeared since the publication of Marx's *Capital*. The more rigid Lassalleian attitudes, their preoccupation with the single demand for Co-operative Producers' Associations assisted by the state, gradually faded away, and the Lassalleans showed themselves more and more incapable of providing the core of a Bonapartist, state-socialist workers' party. The damage done by some of their leaders in this connection was made good by the common sense of the masses. The unification of the two Social Democratic factions, delayed almost entirely by purely personal questions, was certain to be brought about within a short space of time. But even while the division existed—and in spite of it—the movement was powerful enough to frighten the industrial bourgeoisie and to hinder it in its struggle with the Government, which was still independent of it. After all, the German bourgeoisie had never since 1848 been able to rid itself of the Red Bogy.

This class structure was the basis of the parties in Parliament and in the Diets. The big landowners and a section of the peasantry made up the mass of the Conservatives.<sup>69</sup> The industrial bourgeoisie constituted the right wing of bourgeois liberalism, the National Liberals,<sup>70</sup> while the left-wing, the smaller democratic or so-called Progressive Party, was provided by the petty-bourgeoisie supported by a section of the bourgeoisie and of the working class. The workers, finally,

<sup>69</sup> The Conservative Party was founded in 1848 to represent the interests of the Junkers in the Prussian National Assembly. It fought stubbornly in defence of feudal privileges and monarchical absolutism, and opposed the unorthodox tactics employed by Bismarck to bring about Prussia's hegemony in Germany.

<sup>70</sup> The majority of the Liberal opposition in the Prussian Lower House accepted Bismarck's Indemnity Bill in 1866, and henceforth provided the bulk of Bismarck's majorities both in the Reichstag and in the Prussian Chamber under the name of National Liberals. Only the left wing under Eduard Lasker carried on the semblance of a struggle for genuinely constitutional government.

established their own independent party, the Social Democratic Party, to which members of the petty-bourgeoisie also belonged.

A man in Bismarck's position and with his past, if he had any understanding of the situation at all, must have come to the conclusion that the Junkers, as they were, could not be regarded as a viable class, that the bourgeoisie alone of all the propertied classes had any hope of a future (if we ignore the working class, the understanding of whose historical mission we do not expect from him), and that therefore, his new Empire would be the more securely founded, the more he prepared its transformation into a modern bourgeois state. Let us not expect of him what it was impossible for him to accomplish under the circumstances. An immediate transition to parliamentary government, with the Reichstag having decisive power (like the English House of Commons), was neither possible nor, in itself, advisable at the time. Bismarck's dictatorship, exercised through parliamentary forms, was bound to have appeared to him still necessary. We are not attacking him for maintaining it for the time being. We are only questioning the purpose for which it was to be exercised. And it can hardly be doubted that the preparation of conditions corresponding to the English constitution was the only way holding out the prospect of a firm foundation and a peaceful development for the new Empire. Leaving the greater part of the Junker class to go to its inescapable doom, it still seemed possible that out of the rest, and out of new elements, a new class of independent big landowners would evolve who would be nothing but the ornamental crown of the bourgeoisie, a class to which the bourgeoisie, in the full enjoyment of its power, would be bound to leave the representational functions of state, and thus the most lucrative positions and very great influence.

By making political concessions to the bourgeoisie, which in any case could not be withheld for all time (at least this is how the matter was bound to appear from the standpoint of the propertied classes), and by making them gradually and in small and infrequent doses, the new Empire would be brought into a position in which it could catch up with the other states of Western Europe which were far in advance of it politically, shake off finally the last relics of feudalism, as well as the philistine tradition which still permeated the bureaucracy so strongly, and, above all, stand on its own feet when its by no means youthful founders were called to their fathers.

This would not have been difficult. Neither Junkers nor bourgeois possessed even the average amount of energy. The Junkers had consistently proved this for the last sixty years, during which time the state had acted in their own best interest against the steady opposition of these Don Quixotes. The bourgeoisie, likewise tractable by its whole previous history, still bore the bruises of the constitutional conflict; since then, Bismarck's successes had further eroded their power to resist, and fear of the menace of the advancing working class did the rest. Under such circumstances, the man who had realised the national aspirations of the bourgeoisie would have little difficulty in fulfilling their now very modest political demands at a pace of his own choosing. But he had to be clear about the end in view.

From the standpoint of the possessing classes this was the only rational policy. From the standpoint of the working class, it is true, it was already too late to establish a lasting bourgeois predominance. Large-scale industry, and with it the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, developed in Germany at a time when, almost simultaneously with the bourgeoisie, the proletariat was able to appear independently on the political stage, and when, consequently, the struggle be-

tween the two classes had begun before the bourgeoisie had acquired either exclusive or predominant political power. But even though it is too late in Germany for a secure and firmly-founded domination of the bourgeoisie, it was still the best policy in 1870, in the interests of the propertied classes as a whole, to aim at such a domination. For only in this way was it possible to eliminate the numerous relics left over from the days of decaying feudalism, which still permeated legislation and administration. Only in this way was it possible to transplant the full results of the great French Revolution in Germany; to put an end to the whole antiquated condition of Germany; to take the road of modern development consciously and definitively, and to adapt her political to her industrial condition. Then, when the inevitable conflict between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat broke out, it would at least be fought out in normal conditions, in which everyone could see what the issue was, and not in the confusion, uncertainty, incompatibility of interests and perplexity which we saw in Germany in 1848; though this time all the perplexity will be on the side of the bourgeoisie. The proletariat now knows what it wants.

As things stood in Germany in 1871, a man like Bismarck was indeed forced to undertake a policy which sought to steer a middle course between the different classes. And in this respect he cannot be blamed. But, we must ask, what was the aim of this policy? If, irrespective of the tempo with which it was carried out, it was directed consciously and resolutely towards the final establishment of bourgeois rule, then it would be in harmony with historical development, in so far as this was possible at all from the standpoint of the propertied classes. But if it was directed towards the maintenance of the old Prussian State, at the gradual Prussification of the whole of Germany, it was doomed to

ultimate failure. If it was simply aimed at maintaining Bismarck's domination, then it was Bonapartist and was bound to end like all Bonapartism.

The Imperial constitution was the first task. As a basis on which to work there was the constitution of the North German Confederation on the one hand, and the treaties with the South German states on the other.<sup>71</sup> The forces with the aid of which Bismarck had to launch the constitution were the dynasties represented in the *Bundesrat* (Federal Council)<sup>72</sup> on the one hand, and the people represented in the Reichstag on the other. The rights of the dynasties were defined in the North German constitution and in the treaties. The people, on the other hand, had a right to a big extension of their share in political power. They had won freedom from foreign interference and unification—in so far as it could be said to exist—on the battlefield. The people were therefore entitled to decide what this independence was to be used for, how this unification was to be implemented in detail, how it was to be turned to account. And even if the people acknowledged the legality of the North German constitution and of the treaties, that did not prevent them from securing a greater share in political power in the new constitution than they had enjoyed under the

<sup>71</sup> The reference is to the treaties concluded in November 1870, by which the South German states secured a greater measure of autonomy than had been accorded to the member states of the North German Confederation. The provisions of these treaties were incorporated in the constitution of the German Empire of April 1871. Bavaria secured autonomy of military organisation in peace time.

<sup>72</sup> The *Bundersrat* was the second Chamber provided for by the constitution of the North German Confederation and the German Empire. Its members were nominated by the Associated Governments. The representatives of the Prussian Government could not be outvoted. All legislation voted in the popularly elected Reichstag had to be approved by the *Bundesrat* which was, moreover, in charge of the execution of the laws.

previous one. The Reichstag was the sole body which in practice expressed the new "unity". The greater the authority of the Reichstag, the freer the Imperial constitution as compared with those of the separate states, the more firmly would the new Empire be integrated, the more must the Bavarian, the Saxon, the Prussian, merge into the German.

All this must have been clear to anyone who saw further than the end of his nose. But this was not Bismarck's view by any means. On the contrary, he utilised the patriotic hysteria which set in after the war precisely for the purpose of inducing the majority in the Reichstag to renounce not only any extension of the rights of the people but even a clear definition of these rights, and merely to take over into the Imperial constitution the legal principles contained in the North German constitution and in the treaties. All attempts by the small parties to secure the inclusion of the specific rights and liberties of the people in the constitution were defeated, and so was a motion by the Catholic Centre Party (*Zentrum*) demanding the insertion of the article in the Prussian constitution that guaranteed freedom of the press, of association and assembly, as well as the independence of the Church. Thus the Prussian constitution with all its limitations was still more liberal than the Imperial constitution. Taxes were not voted annually but agreed to once and for all "by law", so that for the Reichstag to vote them down is impossible. The Prussian doctrine, incomprehensible to the world outside Germany, that the people's representatives have the right to veto expenditure on paper while the government goes on collecting the money in hard cash, was thus applied to the whole of Germany. The Reichstag is deprived of the most essential powers and reduced to the humiliating position of the Prussian Chamber after the constitutional revisions of 1849 and 1850, the violations perpetrated by

Manteuffel,<sup>73</sup> the constitutional conflict and Sadowa. But the *Bundesrat* enjoys all the authority which the old Federal Diet nominally possessed, and enjoys it in reality, because it is free from the shackles which rendered the Federal Diet impotent. The *Bundesrat* not only has a deciding voice in legislation in addition to the Reichstag, but is also the highest administrative authority, since it issues the regulations for the execution of the laws and, in addition, has power to decide questions relating to "deficiencies in the execution of Imperial laws", that is, deficiencies which in other countries can only be remedied by new law (see Article 7, para 3, which seems very like a deliberate constitutional trap).<sup>74</sup>

Consequently Bismarck sought his main support not in the Reichstag, which represented the unity of the nation, but in the *Bundesrat*, which represented separatist division. He who posed as champion of nationality, lacked the courage to place himself at the head of the nation or its representatives; democracy was to serve him, not the nation. Rather than rely on the people, he relied on devious and underhand dealings behind the scenes, on his ability to scratch together a majority, even if a recalcitrant one, in the *Bundesrat*, by diplomacy, the carrot and the stick. The pettiness of his approach, the baseness of his outlook which is thus revealed, correspond absolutely to the character of the man as we have learned to know him by now. All the same, it is surprising that his great successes did not, at least momentarily, raise him above his own level.

The situation, however, was that the whole constitution

<sup>73</sup>Engels uses the term *Manteuffelei*, an allusion to the constant violations of the Prussian constitution which occurred under the ministry of Otto von Manteuffel (1850-1858).

<sup>74</sup>For a recent summary in English of the constitutional position under Bismarck, cf. Medlicott, op. cit., pp. 93-94.

of the Empire depended on a single firm pivot, namely the Imperial Chancellor. The *Bundesrat* had to be placed in a position which made any responsible executive other than the Chancellor impossible, and which therefore excluded the admissibility of responsible Imperial Ministers. In actual fact, every attempt to put some order into the administration of the Empire through a responsible ministry met with insurmountable resistance, on the grounds that it infringed the right of the *Bundesrat*. The constitution, as was soon discovered, was "made to measure" for Bismarck. It was a step further on the road to his personal rule, based on a balance of the parties in the Reichstag, and of the separate states and in the *Bundesrat*—a step further on the road to Bonapartism.

In general, apart from one or two concessions to Bavaria and Württemberg, one cannot say that the new Imperial Constitution represents a retrograde step. But this is about the best that can be said of it. The economic needs of the bourgeoisie were satisfied in the main, but the same barriers that existed at the time of the constitutional conflict were erected against their political aspirations in so far as they still had any.

In so far as they still had any. For it is undeniable that in the hands of the National Liberals, these aspirations declined considerably and continued to do so all the time. These gentlemen, far from demanding that Bismarck should facilitate their collaboration, were much more concerned to display their readiness to let him have his way wherever possible, and frequently even where it was, or should have been, impossible. No one can blame him for despising them—but were his Junkers any better or braver?

The next field in which national unity remained to be established, currency, was dealt with by the Bank and Currency Laws of 1873-75. The introduction of a gold currency was an important advance. But it was introduced

only in a half-hearted and hesitant fashion and it is not quite firmly established even now. The money system which was adopted—a third of a *taler*, now called a mark, with decimal sub-divisions—had been proposed by Soetbeer towards the end of the 'thirties. The real monetary unit was the gold 20 mark piece. This could have been made to exchange at par with either the English sovereign, the gold 25 franc piece, or the American gold 5 dollar piece, with only a slight alteration in its value, and could thus have been linked with one of the three great currency systems of the world market. Nevertheless it was preferred to create a separate currency system, which made trade and currency calculations unnecessarily difficult. The laws concerning Imperial treasury notes and banks restricted the paper-money swindles of the small states and of their banks and, coming as they did after the great crash of 1873, they bore the mark of a certain prudence befitting Germany's inexperience in these matters. Here also, the economic interests of the bourgeoisie were, on the whole, taken into account.

Finally there were the negotiations for a unified code of law. The resistance of the Southern states to the extension of Imperial powers to the sphere of civil law was overcome. The code of civil law, however, is still in process of elaboration, while the penal code, civil and criminal procedure, commercial and bankruptcy law, and the organisation of the judiciary have been regulated on a uniform basis. The elimination of the varied formal and substantive legal norms of the petty states was in itself an urgent requirement of progressive bourgeois development, and this elimination constitutes the chief merit of the new laws, much more than their actual content.

English law has a history in which a good deal of old Germanic freedom survived beyond the Middle Ages; which does not know the Police State, for it was nipped in the bud

in the two revolutions of the seventeenth century; and which culminated in two centuries of uninterrupted development of civil liberty. French law is based on the great Revolution, which, after completely destroying feudalism and the arbitrary police powers of absolutism, translated the economic requirements of the newly established modern society into the language of juridical, legal norms in the classic code proclaimed by Napoleon. Compared to these, what is the historical foundation for our German Law? Nothing but the passive centuries-old process of the decay of the Middle Ages, spurred on mostly from outside and still far from completed; an economically backward society still haunted by the ghosts of the feudal Junker and guild craftsman searching for a new body; a legal system in the fabric of which arbitrary police despotism still tears one hole after another every day, despite the disappearance of princely cabinet justice in 1848. The fathers of the new law books of the German Empire have graduated from this worst of all possible bad schools and the quality of their work is correspondingly bad. Quite apart from the juridical aspect, political freedom comes off badly enough in this legislation. Though Assessors' Courts<sup>76</sup> provide the bourgeoisie and the petty-bourgeoisie with the means to help keep down the working class, the state nevertheless safeguards itself as much as possible against the danger of a revived bourgeois opposition by limiting trial by jury. The political paragraphs of the penal code are frequently marked by a vagueness and flexibility, as if they were specifically

<sup>76</sup> Assessors' Courts (*Schöffengerichte*) were introduced in some German states in 1848 and in the German Empire in 1871. These courts consisted of the judge and two assessors. Unlike juries, they decided both the question of guilt and the extent of the punishment. Appeals could be lodged against their verdicts. Assessors had to be at least thirty years old, and there was a residential and property qualification.

designed for the present Supreme Court and vice versa. The new codes of law mark an advance on the old Prussian Code.<sup>76</sup> That goes without saying. Stöcker himself would find it difficult to cook up anything as ghastly as that code of law to-day, even if he allowed himself to be circumcised.<sup>77</sup> But the provinces which have hitherto lived under French law recognise only too well the difference between the classical original and the faded copy. It was the renunciation of their programme by the National Liberals which made possible this first step backwards, the strengthening of the authority of the state at the expense of civil liberty.

We have still to mention the Imperial Press law. The penal code had already settled the question in respect of material law. The establishment of uniform formal regulations for the whole Empire, the elimination of stamp duties and monetary deposits which still existed here and there, therefore, constituted the only real advances brought about by this law.

In order that Prussia could maintain its reputation as a model state, so-called local self-government was introduced. What it amounted to was the removal of the most objectionable relics of feudalism, while as much as possible of the old state of affairs was retained. This was the purpose of the new district organisation. The manorial police powers of the Junkers had become an anachronism. They were abolished in theory as a feudal privilege, but the essence was retained by the establishment of manorial districts based on the large

<sup>76</sup> The Prussian Code, promulgated in 1794, unified judicial administration for all the Prussian provinces on the basis of the strict feudal separation of orders.

<sup>77</sup> Adolf Stöcker (1835-1909) was one of the leading exponents of the reactionary, backward-looking "*volkish*" ideology which gained considerably in influence during the last decades of the nineteenth century. In 1878 he founded the Christian Social Party whose main electoral plank was anti-Semitism. Cf. George L. Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology*, London, 1966, pp. 126-145.

estates, in which the landowner himself either exercises the powers of a communal mayor in his capacity of steward of the manor, or at least nominates the steward. Further, the whole police authority and jurisdiction in the remaining districts was conferred on a district prefect, who is of course almost everywhere a big landowner. The landowners control also the rural (i.e. non-manorial) districts. The feudal privileges of individuals were taken away, but the absolute authority connected with these privileges was handed over to the whole class. In a similar manner the large landowners in England transformed themselves into Justices of the Peace and controllers of rural administration, police and magistrate courts, and thus retained continued possession under new modernised title of all the important positions of power, which could no longer be held on the old feudal basis. But this is the only similarity between English and German "local self-government". I should like to see the English minister who would dare to propose in Parliament that elected local officials should have to be confirmed in office or could be replaced by men more acceptable to the central government; that government officials should be appointed, vested with the powers of the Prussian *Landräte*, district governments and provincial governors; that the central government should have the reserve powers of intervention in local government affairs at all levels as provided for in the German District Government Act; or above all, that there should be power to deny citizens due process of law, a power unknown in lands where English is spoken or English law prevails, but provided for on every page of the District Government Act. And while both district administrations and provincial Diets in Germany are still composed, in the old feudal manner, of representatives of the three orders—large landowners, towns and rural communes—in England an ultra-Conservative ministry introduces a Bill transferring

the administration of all the counties to authorities elected on the basis of almost universal suffrage.<sup>78</sup>

The District Government Bill for the six Eastern provinces (1871) was the first sign that Bismarck had no intention of allowing Prussia to be absorbed into Germany but, on the contrary, that he was determined to make these provinces even more the firm bastion of old Prussianism. Under cover of new names, the Junkers retained all the essential positions of power, while the helots of Germany, the rural workers in these areas, domestic and wage-labourers alike, remained in their previous state of *de facto* serfdom, admitted to only two public functions—to serve as soldiers and to provide voting cattle for the Junkers in elections to the Reichstag. The services hereby rendered by Bismarck to the revolutionary Socialist Party are invaluable and merit the greatest gratitude.

But what is one to say about the stupidity of the Junkers who attacked the District Government Bill, designed exclusively in their interest to prolong their feudal privileges, only with modernised nomenclature, and stamp their feet in the manner of spoiled children? The House of Peers, or rather, the House of Junkers, first of all threw out the Bill, which had already been delayed a whole year, and only accepted it after twenty-four new "Peers" had been created. The Prussian Junkers once again proved themselves to be petty, die-hard, hopeless reactionaries, incapable of providing the basis for a great independent party with an historical rôle in the life of the nation, as the English landowners are in fact doing. They thereby demonstrated their complete lack of understanding. Bismarck had only to demonstrate their equally complete lack of character, and a little pressure

<sup>78</sup> The reference is to the County Councils Act (1888) passed during Salisbury's second Administration, which was pending in Parliament at the time Engels was writing the present manuscript.

applied judiciously transformed them into a pro-Bismarck party *sans phrase*.

The *Kulturkampf*<sup>79</sup> was intended for this purpose. The execution of the plan to create a Prussian-German Empire was bound to produce, as a reaction, the unification into a single party of all the anti-Prussian elements, based on the previous separatism. These motley elements found a common banner in Ultramontanism.<sup>80</sup> The rebellion of common sense, even among large numbers of Catholics, against the new dogma of Papal infallibility on the one hand, and the destruction of the Papal States and the so-called imprisonment of the Pope in Rome<sup>81</sup> on the other, stimulated the closer union of all the militant forces of Catholicism. Thus the specifically Catholic Centre Party (*Zentrum*) already emerged in the Prussian Diet during the war, in the autumn of 1870. It had only 57 deputies in the first German Reichstag, but grew at each succeeding election until it had more than 100. It was composed of extremely varied elements. Its main basis in Prussia was amongst the small peasants of the Rhineland, who still regarded themselves as "Prussians by compulsion" (*Musspreussen*). In addition, they received support from the Catholic landowners and peasants of the Westphalian bishoprics of Münster and Paderborn and from

<sup>79</sup> This term was applied by the National Liberals to Bismarck's conflict with the Catholic Church during the eighteen-seventies. The term is in itself a measure of Bismarck's success in using the conflict as a diversion to distract attention from his major policies.

<sup>80</sup> This term is generally applied to the forces within the Catholic Church which defended the claims of the Papacy against the powers of the secular state.

<sup>81</sup> After the withdrawal of the French garrison from Rome, the Italian army occupied the city in September 1870. A referendum in October resulted in an overwhelming majority in favour of incorporation in the Italian national state. The Pope excommunicated all those responsible for the annexation, and declared himself a "prisoner in the Vatican". The conflict between the Papacy and Italy lasted until the Concordat concluded between Pius XI and Mussolini in 1929.

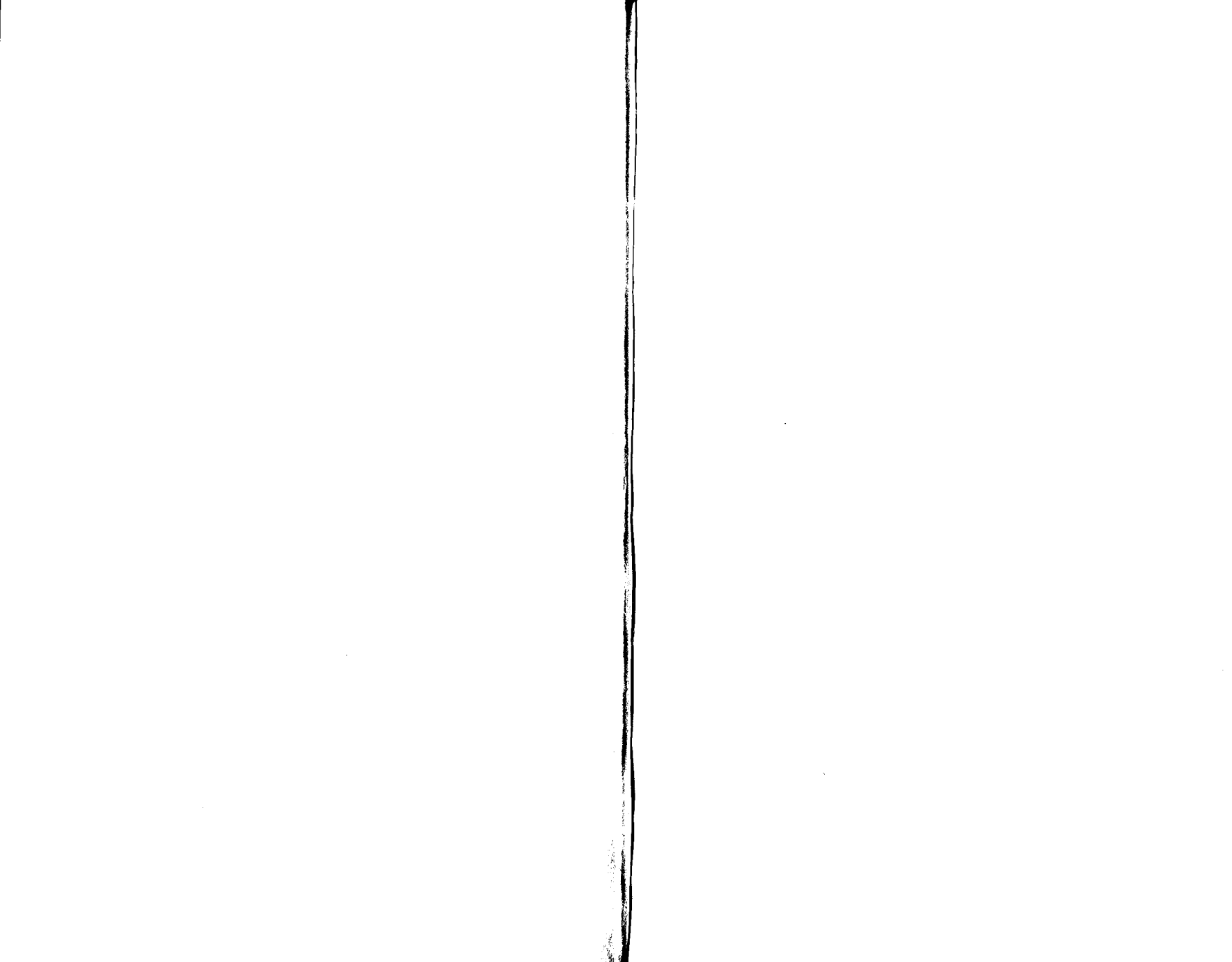
the Catholic Silesians. Their other main source of strength were the South German Catholics, especially the Bavarians. The strength of the *Zentrum*, however, lay far less in the Catholic religion than in the fact that it reflected the hostility of the mass of the people to the specific Prussianism which now claimed domination over Germany. This hostility was particularly marked in the Catholic areas; this was accompanied by sympathy for Austria, now excluded from Germany. In line with these two popular trends, the *Zentrum* was decidedly separatist and federalist.

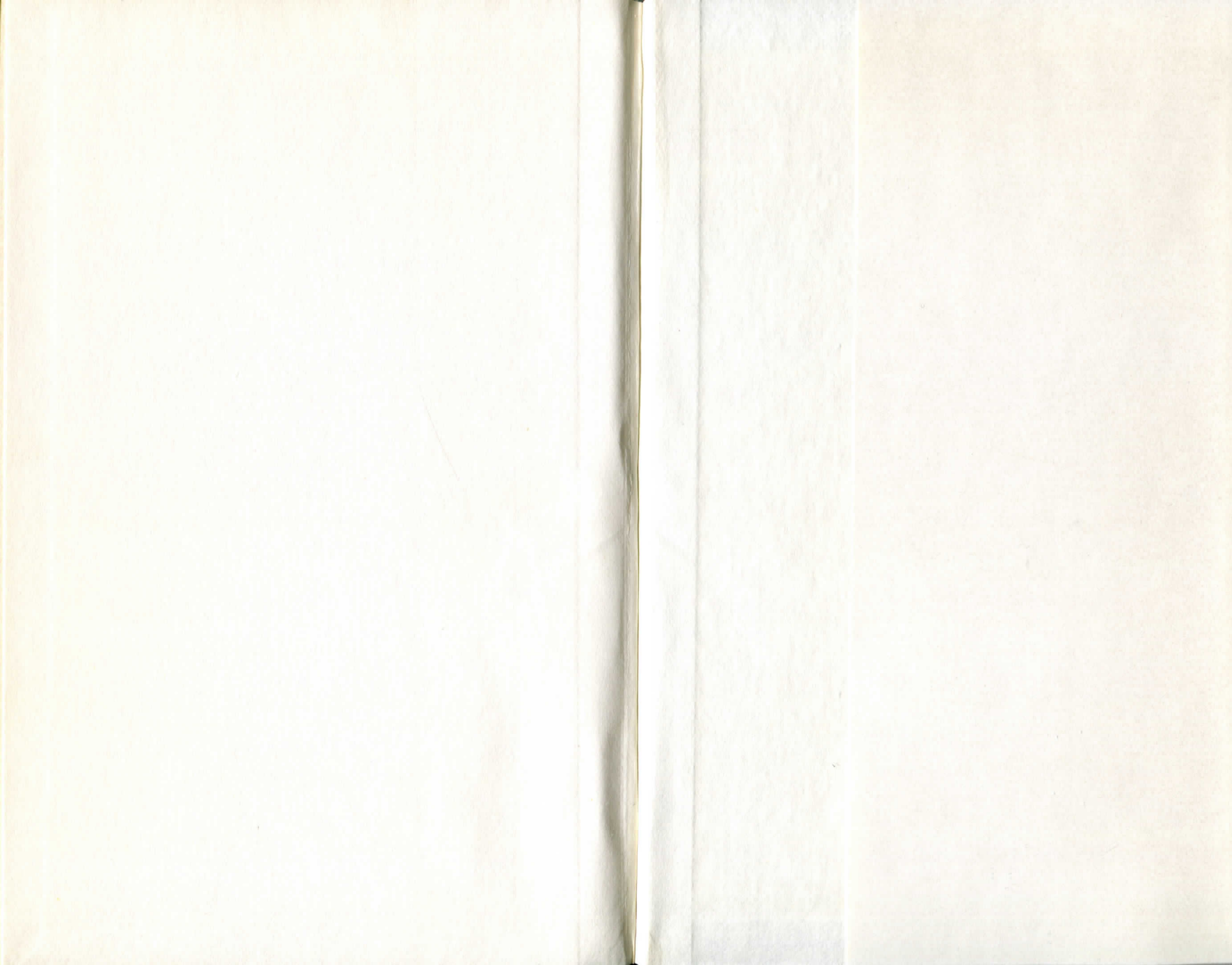
The essentially anti-Prussian character of the *Zentrum* was immediately recognised by the other smaller Reichstag fractions, who were anti-Prussian for local reasons, (not like the Social Democrats who were so for general and national reasons). Not only the Catholic Poles and Alsations, but also the Protestant Hanoverians became close allies of the *Zentrum*.<sup>82</sup> And although the bourgeois-liberal factions never understood the real character of the so-called Ultramontanes, they nevertheless revealed an inkling of the actual state of affairs, when they denounced the *Zentrum* as a party "without a fatherland" and an "anti-Imperial" party.

<sup>82</sup> The representatives of the Poles, Alsations and anti-Prussian Hanoverians formed separate parties in the Reichstag, which consistently opposed Bismarck's government.

*The MS breaks off here.*







# **SECRET DIPLOMATIC HISTORY OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY**

and

## **THE STORY OF THE LIFE OF LORD PALMERSTON**

KARL MARX

Introduction by LESTER HUTCHINSON

These two fascinating pamphlets by Marx, which dwell particularly on the relations between Britain and Tsarist Russia, were written in English and published by Eleanor Marx after her father's death. They have long been unavailable.

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