

German Unification

©LMS/08

Obstacles to Unification

- Like Italy, one of the most serious obstacles to German unification was the fact that foreign nations controlled Germanic states. The most serious threat was Austria.
- Many German states were independent and were reluctant to relinquish that to a Prussian state that seemed very *authoritarian* (obedient to authority, against individual freedom).



1864: The Danish War

- Denmark controlled the northern provinces of Schleswig & Holstein.
- Bismarck teamed up with Austria (even though Austria was secretly his enemy...), defeated Denmark, and took Schleswig as a prize. (Holstein went to Austria.)



1866: The Austro-Prussian War

- Bismarck had to get rid of Austrian influence in Germany. He allied himself with Cavour in Italy and provoked Austria into war.
- Prussia was MUCH more industrialized than Austria, and the war was over in only 7 weeks. Prussia won. Austria gave up Holstein and was out of German affairs.
- Northern Germany was unified. (At this time, Italy got Venetia...)



Results?

- The balance of power in Europe was upset. Germany emerged as a major power with the leading military in Europe (if not the world).

Prussian Leadership

- Prussia was the largest German state, ruled by King Wilhelm I and the Prime Minister Otto von Bismarck.
- It was very authoritarian and militaristic.
- Bismarck wanted to use "Blood and Iron" – Prussian *military* and *industrial* strength to unify Germany.
- In 1815, there were 39 different Germanic states. In the revolutions of 1848, there were attempts to unify Germany, but they were unsuccessful – Germany wasn't ready. Bismarck was convinced that his policy of *Blood & Iron* would force the states to pull together to defeat enemies in war.



1870: Franco-Prussian War (France vs. Prussia)

- In order to defeat France, Bismarck knew that all German states would have to unite. (France had the most powerful military in Europe...)
- He provoked France into declaring war.
- All German states unified in their effort to defeat France – They were successful.
- Germany got *Alsace & Lorraine* (Two important iron producing regions) from France
- Germany was unified, it was 1871. (Italy unified as a result of this war also.)



Results?

- France was humiliated by Germany and became bitter and vengeful.
- Germany was an aggressive & militaristic nation . . . The wars won't stop here . . .