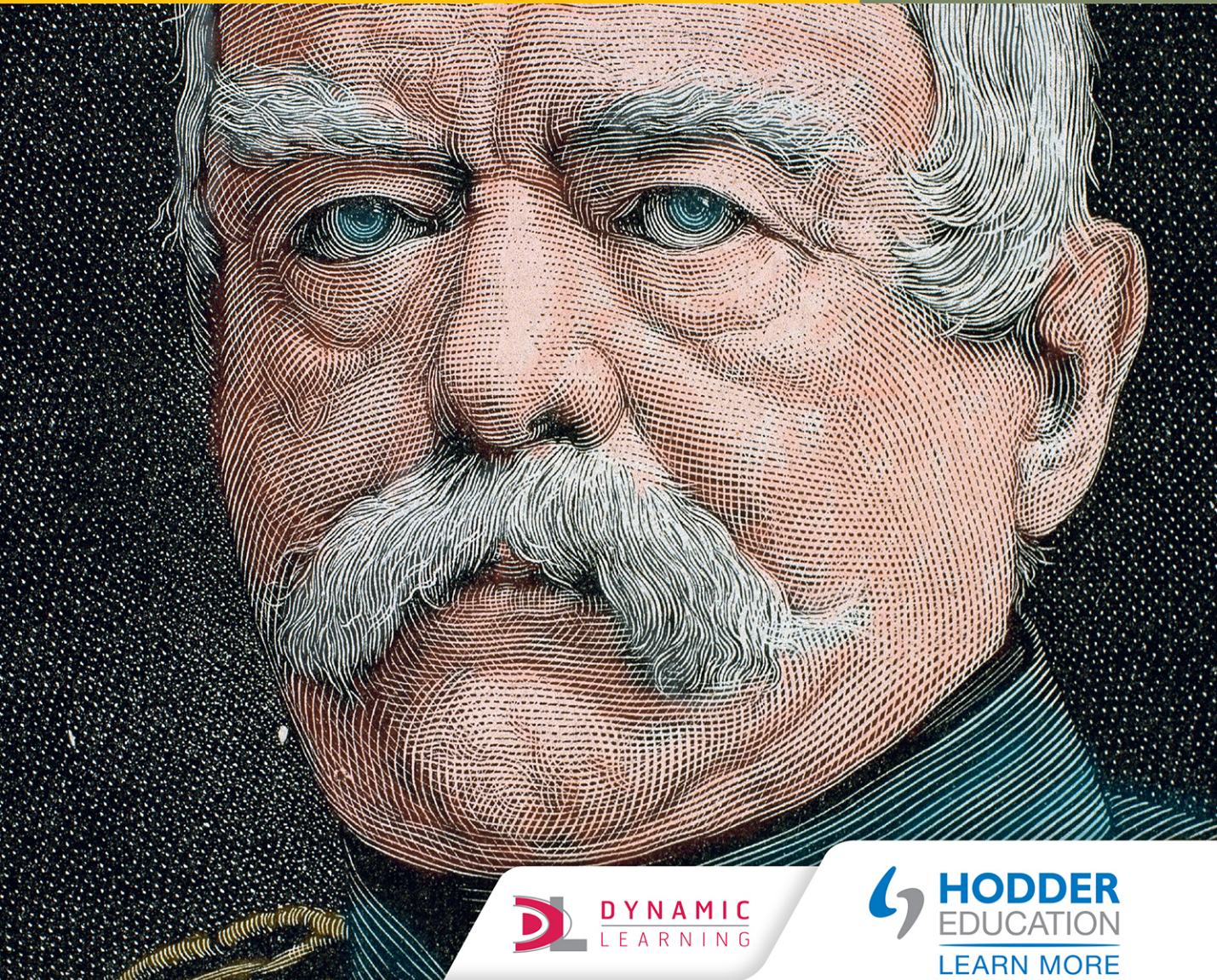


access to history

The Unification of Germany and the Challenge of Nationalism 1789–1919

ALAN FARMER

FIFTH EDITION



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Dedication

Keith Randell (1943–2002)

The *Access to History* series was conceived and developed by Keith, who created a series to ‘cater for students as they are, not as we might wish them to be’. He leaves a living legacy of a series that for over 20 years has provided a trusted, stimulating and well-loved accompaniment to post-16 study. Our aim with these new editions is to continue to offer students the best possible support for their studies.

CHAPTER 1

Context

The concept of Germany emerged in the Roman period. Roman historians described 'Germania' as the region east of the River Rhine and north of the River Danube. It is unlikely that the warring tribes who occupied this part of central Europe had much notion of being 'German'. Nevertheless, the Romans regarded these tribes as a major threat and fought a number of campaigns against them. By AD100, some of the Germanic tribes were incorporated within the Roman Empire. But other tribes, for example, the Franks and Saxons, continued to pose a challenge. The migration of these tribes westwards in the fourth and fifth centuries helped bring about the collapse of the western Roman Empire.

The creation of the Holy Roman Empire

During the **early Middle Ages** a number of **duchies** – Bavaria, Swabia, Saxony, Franconia and Thuringia – emerged in what is today Germany. By 800, these duchies were incorporated into the great empire created by the Frankish ruler Charlemagne. Following Charlemagne's death in 814, his empire collapsed as his grandsons fought for dominance. In 843, it was split into three parts:

- West Francia, which became the kingdom of France in 987.
- Middle Francia, which stretched from the **Low Countries** to northern Italy.
- East Francia, which comprised much of present-day Germany. In 962, this area became known as the Holy Roman Empire. This empire continued to expand. At times, its rulers had a powerful influence on central Europe, including Italy. The empire itself, however, was not particularly united. It comprised hundreds of small principalities, duchies, bishoprics and imperial towns.

The northern crusades

From the twelfth century, German rulers expanded eastwards. In 1193, Pope Celestine III declared a crusade against **pagans** in northern Europe. The Teutonic Knights, the largest German military order, took control of lands around the Baltic Sea. These lands were inhabited by an ethnic group known as the Old Prussians – a group related to the Latvians and the Lithuanians. The German state of Prussia took its name from the Baltic Prussians. Prussia itself, however, was ruled by its German conquerors.

KEY TERMS

Early Middle Ages

The period from AD c.700 to 1100.

Duchies States ruled by a duke.

Low Countries Present-day Belgium and the Netherlands.

Pagans People who are not Christians, Muslims or Jews and who often believe in several gods.

KEY TERM

Habsburg The ruling family of the Austrian Empire.

Austria and the Habsburgs

The **Habsburgs** became rulers of Austria in 1276. Thanks largely to a series of dynastic marriages, successive members of the Habsburg family expanded their realms to include Burgundy, Bohemia, the Netherlands and Hungary. A Habsburg was first elected Holy Roman Emperor in 1452 – and the family retained the title thereafter.

The Reformation

In 1517, German monk Martin Luther nailed his Ninety-Five Theses to the church door in Wittenberg. These were a list of criticisms of the corrupt practices of the Roman Catholic Church. Luther's action sparked the Protestant Reformation. Supported by a number of powerful German princes, Luther established his own Lutheran Church. Protestantism was strong in the north German states while south German states remained predominantly Catholic.

The Thirty Years' War

Religious difference helped bring about the Thirty Years' War (1618–48); initially a war between Protestants and Catholics within the Holy Roman Empire. However, as the war continued, it became increasingly a struggle for power in central Europe with France and Sweden opposed to the Holy Roman Empire. The armies of the anti-Habsburg coalition ensured that Habsburg authority was limited to Austrian and Czech lands when the war ended in 1648. By 1648, Germany was devastated. Killings, famine and the spread of disease led to a major decline in population.

The rise of Brandenburg–Prussia

By the early seventeenth century, Brandenburg-Prussia was one of the largest states in northern Germany.

- The province of Brandenburg had been established in the mid-tenth century. In 1417, its ruler Frederick was invested with the title of Elector, giving him some say in the appointment of the Holy Roman Emperor.
- East Prussia had been ruled by the Teutonic Knights until the order was dissolved in 1525. Its last Grand Master, Albert of Hohenzollern, became the first Duke of Prussia.
- In 1591, John Sigismund of Brandenburg married the eldest daughter of the Duke of Prussia, who had no male heir. The two provinces thus effectively became one.

In 1640, Frederick William, the Great Elector, became ruler of Brandenburg-Prussia. He and his ministers reformed and reorganised his scattered territories. His son, Elector Frederick III (1688–1713), upgraded Prussia from a duchy to a kingdom, becoming King Frederick I. Thereafter, Brandenburg-Prussia became known as Prussia, although most of its territory lay outside Prussia proper. Frederick I was succeeded by his son Frederick William I (1713–40).

Thrifty and practical, he established the structure of the tightly centralised future Prussian state. He also created a very powerful army.

Frederick the Great (1740–86)

In 1740, Frederick William I was succeeded by his son Frederick. Unlike his father, Frederick II soon proved he was ready to use the Prussian army – to great effect. In December 1740, Prussian forces seized Silesia, one of the most prosperous provinces of Austria. This action:

- doubled the size of Prussia
- triggered the War of Austrian Succession (1740–8)
- led to bitter enmity between Prussia and Austria for the next four decades.

Frederick, a man of considerable military talent, warded off Austrian attempts to retake Silesia. In the Seven Years' War (1756–63), Frederick found himself at war against Austria, France, Russia and Saxony. Allied with Britain and Hanover, he managed to win a number of notable victories. The war ended in stalemate, ensuring that Prussia clung on to Silesia. Frederick's campaigns raised the reputation of the Prussian army. By the late eighteenth century, it was regarded as the best in Europe, making Prussia seem more powerful than its size warranted. Its scattered territories had a population of only 5.5 million.

Frederick was more than just a successful soldier. He is often seen as the epitome of an enlightened despot – a ruler who had absolute powers but used those powers to good effect for his people. Frederick introduced important law reforms and promoted education. He created a system of government which worked for him. But during the reign of his successor, his nephew Frederick William II (1786–97), neither the army nor the administrative system functioned with its former efficiency.

Austrian power

After 1648, Austria recovered economically and in population size. Its Habsburg rulers also managed to re-establish much of their imperial prestige and influence within the Holy Roman Empire. They made the most of their role as protectors of the empire from the aggressive designs of the Turks in the east and the French in the west. By the 1713 Treaty of Utrecht, Austria gained control of the Spanish Netherlands (modern-day Belgium), which became known as the Austrian Netherlands, and much of northern Italy. These acquisitions, plus conquests in the Balkans, ensured that Austria remained a great power.

The death of Charles VI in 1740, however, brought his daughter Maria Theresa to the throne. Frederick II seized the opportunity to occupy Silesia, and thereafter Austria and Prussia vied for supremacy in Germany. By the late eighteenth century, Prussia was the greatest power in northern Germany while Austria remained dominant in the south. On paper, Austria was much stronger than Prussia. By 1789, the Austrian Empire stretched over 725,000 km² (280,000 square miles) and contained 24 million people. However, Austria's size and mix of different ethnic groups made it a difficult state to rule.

As a woman, Maria Theresa was unable to inherit the imperial title. Instead, first her husband Francis I and then her son Joseph II became Holy Roman Emperors. But Maria Theresa (1740–80) held the real power. An enlightened monarch, she transformed Austria into an increasingly powerful and centralised state. After her death in 1780, Joseph II embarked on a series of radical reforms. Hoping to bring together the diverse components of his empire, he reduced the power of regional assemblies in Hungary, northern Italy and the Austrian Netherlands, and made German the official language everywhere. Many of Joseph's reforms were unpopular, alienating the Austrian and Hungarian nobility, and the Austrian Netherlands, where a serious revolt broke out in 1789. Joseph died in 1790. His successor, Leopold II, in an effort to retain control, cancelled most of Joseph's reforms.

The partition of Poland

In the late eighteenth century, the rulers of Prussia, Austria and Russia expanded their territory at the expense of Poland – a large but poorly governed state. In 1772, Prussia, Russia and Austria carved up two-thirds of Poland. In 1788, a Polish parliament attempted to strengthen and modernise the country in order to win back the lost territory. Prussia, Austria and Russia had no wish to see a revived and unified Poland. Accordingly, the Second and Third Partitions of 1793 and 1795 wiped the state of Poland off the map.

The smaller German states

Germany was made up of hundreds of principalities of all shapes and sizes. Many were little more than small towns, often ruled by bishops, most of whom were sons of powerful noble families. Larger states included:

- Bavaria – a southern state which was strongly Catholic
- Saxony – economically powerful but poorly governed
- Hanover – a north German state whose rulers were kings of Britain from 1714 to 1837.

The smaller states were generally characterised by administrative inefficiency. Their rulers tended to be more concerned with their mistresses and their hunting dogs than with their subjects – most of whom were poor peasants or serfs.

Prior to 1789, few Germans dreamed or even thought of unification. Given the diversity, there was very little sense of German nationhood.

Germany 1789–1848

At the end of the eighteenth century, there seemed little likelihood of a united German nation coming into existence. Germany, in so far as it existed, was a ramshackle empire, made up of hundreds of petty principalities, free cities and ecclesiastical and aristocratic estates. However, by 1815, largely as a result of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, thousands of Germans longed passionately for a unified Germany. Nationalist enthusiasm continued post-1815. This chapter will examine the factors that led to the rise of German nationalism by focusing on the following themes:

- ◆ The impact of the French Revolution and Napoleon
- ◆ Reform and repression 1815–40
- ◆ Economic developments 1815–48
- ◆ Germany 1840–8

KEY DATES

| | | | | |
|----------------|----------------------------------|-------------|-------------|---|
| 1789 | Start of the French Revolution | 1830 | July | Revolution in Paris |
| 1806 | End of the Holy Roman Empire | 1832 | May | Nationalist festival at Hambach |
| 1813 | Battle of Leipzig | 1832 | June | The Six Articles |
| 1814–15 | Vienna peace settlement | 1834 | | <i>Zollverein</i> came into operation |
| 1815 | German Confederation established | 1840 | | Frederick William IV became King of Prussia |
| 1817 | Wartburg Festival | 1846 | | Schleswig-Holstein affair |
| 1819 | Carlsbad Decrees | 1847 | | Hippenhelm meeting |
| 1820 | Congress of Troppau | | | |

1 The impact of the French Revolution and Napoleon

■ *What was Napoleon's impact on Germany?*

Historian Thomas Nipperdey (1996) begins his monumental history of nineteenth-century Germany with the phrase, 'In the beginning was Napoleon'. The French emperor's influence on German development was considerable.

The situation in Germany in 1789

In 1789, Germany did not exist as a country in the sense of being a unified political state. Indeed, the term 'Germany' had little political significance.

The political situation

In 1789, some 22 million Germans were divided into 314 states, varying in size from the 300,000 km² (115,533 square miles) of the Habsburg monarchy to the 85 km² (33 square miles) of Schwartzburg-Sonderhausen. Another 1400 towns, cities and territories had a degree of autonomy. Each state had its own ruling class, its own traditions, its own laws and its own nobility determined to maintain their prerogatives.

Since 1512, the multitude of states had been loosely united within the Holy Roman Empire, whose nominal emperor was the Habsburg emperor of Austria. According to the French writer Voltaire (1694–1778), the Holy Roman Empire was neither holy, Roman nor even an empire. It certainly lacked any real power. What power it had was essentially Austrian power.

The Holy Roman Empire did have a permanent Imperial **Diet**, a gathering of representatives of the various states nominally chaired by the emperor, who was bound by its decrees. However, the conflicting interests of the states rarely achieved a unified position. The empire had no central political administration, no common tax system and no standing army. While the Imperial **Diet** could call up an army, there was no guarantee (or much likelihood) that the states would send the predetermined quota of troops or pay their financial contributions for the army's upkeep.

Germany lacked clear natural frontiers, especially in the east and south. Nor was it possible to define Germany's extent on ethnic grounds. The Holy Roman Empire included land peopled by French, Dutch, Danish, Polish and Czech speakers. It also excluded sizeable territories with a predominantly German population – not least Prussia, the only other German state apart from Austria that counted for anything in international affairs.

Germans in the south German states were overwhelmingly Catholic. Those in the north were mainly Protestant. Religious hostility between Protestants and Catholics made political unification difficult.

The economic and social situation

German economic and social development lagged far behind that of Britain and western Europe. Development was retarded by several factors:

- The **feudal system** of economic and social order survived almost intact in many states. This meant that there were strict divisions of society: a large class of peasantry, a small number of urban workers, an even smaller middle class and a privileged aristocracy.
- Over 80 per cent of Germans lived and worked on the land. In the west, most of the so-called free peasants were burdened by rent, **tithes** and labour dues. East of the River Elbe most peasants were still **serfs**.
- There were great varieties in currencies and weights and measures, innumerable customs barriers and internal taxes, and poor communications, all of which restricted commercial growth.

KEY TERMS

Diet An assembly or parliament.

Feudal system A system of social organisation prevalent in much of Europe in the Middle Ages. Powerful lords owned most of the land.

Tithes A tax paid to the Church; in theory, a tenth of a person's earnings.

Serfs Peasants who are forced to remain on the land and work for a landowner.

- Most skilled workers in the towns belonged to powerful guilds. Determined to retain their privileges, the guilds prevented free competition and blocked economic progress.
- The aristocracy owned most of the land and held all the key posts in the various courts, armies and administrations.

French impact on Germany

Historian Martin Kitchen (2006) argued, 'The old [German] empire was destroyed by blood and iron, just as some seventy years later the new empire was to be created by the use of force.' French force destroyed the old Germany and provided the initial stimulus to the movement towards German unification. Ironically, traditional French policy had been to keep Germany divided.

The impact of the French Revolution

In 1789, France rose up in revolt against the *ancien régime*. The power of the French monarchy, the Church and aristocracy was reduced. Many educated Germans initially approved of developments in France, particularly calls for liberty, equality and **fraternity** and for representative government. They were less supportive of developments in 1793 when King Louis XVI was executed and thousands of people followed him to the guillotine in the Reign of Terror. By 1793, Austria, Prussia and many other German rulers, anxious to stop the spread of revolutionary ideas, were at war with France – a war which they failed to win. Some German radicals, still supportive of the Revolution, welcomed French military successes against Austria and Prussia.

The Napoleonic settlement

The hotchpotch of German states lacked the ability and unity to resist the military ambitions of Napoleon Bonaparte, French leader from 1799 and French emperor from 1804. Having defeated both Austria and Prussia in 1805–6, Napoleon controlled most of central Europe. In **Karl Marx's** words, he set about 'cleansing the German **Augean stables**'.

- France annexed the territory on the left bank of the Rhine in 1803.
- French policy (in 1803 and 1806) ensured that a host of small German states were absorbed by their larger neighbours. The total number of states was reduced to 39. Baden increased four-fold as a consequence of the Napoleonic settlement while Bavaria now included 80 previously autonomous political entities.
- In 1806, Bavaria, Württemberg Baden and thirteen other south German states were formed into the Confederation of the Rhine – a third German power to offset Prussia and Austria.
- Prussia (in 1807) lost all its land west of the Elbe, much of which became part of the Kingdom of Westphalia. Prussia's Polish territories became the Grand Duchy of Warsaw.
- In 1806, the Holy Roman Empire was formally dissolved.

KEY TERMS

Ancien régime The old feudal order in France.

Fraternity Brotherhood and companionship.

Cleansing the Augean stables A difficult and dirty task. (According to Greek legend, it was one of the labours of the hero Hercules.)

KEY FIGURE

Karl Marx (1818–83)

German philosopher, economist and revolutionary who is generally regarded as the founder of communism.

German opposition

For several years, Germany was subject to Napoleon's will. However, in 1809, Austria resumed war with Napoleon. Count Philip Stadion, Austria's first minister, hoped to mobilise popular German sentiment and inspire a war of liberation. The romantic notion that the people would arise and overthrow France was naïve. Only the Tyrol, an area annexed by Bavaria in 1805, caused the French much trouble. Here, Andreas Hofer led a guerrilla campaign in the mountains, defeating French and Bavarian forces in a series of engagements. But this was a regional revolt, not a fully fledged German uprising. Hofer was eventually captured and executed.

Austria received little support from the other German states. Its regular army was crushed by Napoleon in June 1809 at the Battle of Wagram. In the Peace of Schönbrunn, Austria ceded further territories and was forced to pay crippling **reparations** to France. Austria now sought to appease Napoleon, who married the emperor's daughter.

KEY TERMS

Reparations Money that a country is forced to pay to the victor after defeat in war.

Nationalism The belief in – and support for – a national identity and the desire for the nation's success.

Continental blockade Napoleon's trade boycott of British goods. Introduced in 1806, its aim was to force Britain to make peace with France.

Volk The German word translates as people or folk but the concept goes beyond that, implying that the (German) *volk* are almost mystically united and are superior to other groups.

The development of German nationalism

French domination soon contributed to a sense of common cause and an emerging German **nationalism**.

French impositions

French rule alienated many Germans. Most were affected by sharply rising prices, by heavy taxes and by French controls. The German economy, subordinated to French needs, was seriously disrupted by Napoleon's **continental blockade** that tried to exclude British goods. Germans also loathed military conscription. In 1808, for example, the Confederation of the Rhine was forced to provide Napoleon with 119,000 soldiers. Resentment thus built up against the French invaders, who squeezed all they could from Germany.

Spain and Portugal

In 1808, the Spanish and Portuguese rose in revolt against French rule. Their efforts to win independence from Napoleon were an inspiration for many Germans.

German intellectuals

From the late eighteenth century, a number of German intellectuals, stressing the importance of a common language and common cultural traditions, had supported national unity.

German philosophers – Johann Herder, Johann Fichte and George Hegel – developed the view that the German people were a unique **volk** who should belong to the same state (see Source A, opposite). More accessible to most Germans were the writings of Ernst Arndt, a poet and pamphleteer, who urged the creation of a German fatherland.

Emulating France

To some Germans, France was a useful model – a politically self-confident nation that had come to dominate Europe. Liberal Germans also approved of many French reforms. In many German states:

- The Napoleonic Code was introduced, ensuring equality before the law and an end to aristocratic and Church privileges.
- There was increased middle-class involvement in government and in administration.
- Feudal restrictions came to an end.
- Church lands were secularised.

SOURCE A

From *Address to the German Nation* (1808) written by German philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte (available at www.historyman.co.uk/unification/Fichte.html).

The first original and truly natural boundaries of states are beyond doubt their internal boundaries. Those who speak the same language are joined to each other by a multitude of invisible bonds by nature herself, long before any human art begins: they understand each other and have the power of continuing to make themselves understood more and more clearly; they belong together and are by nature one and an inseparable whole.

SOURCE QUESTION

What were the 'multitude of invisible bonds' that Fichte refers to in Source A?

Prussia 1806–13

After devastating defeats by Napoleon at Jena and Auerstedt in 1806, the Prussian state virtually collapsed. It only survived because of the intervention of Russian Tsar Alexander I and Napoleon's calculation that a buffer state between France and Russia might be desirable. Nevertheless, Prussia lost much of its territory, had to pay huge reparations to France, endured a French army of occupation and had to agree to limit its army to 42,000 men.

Under the leadership of Baron vom Stein and then Karl August von Hardenberg, chancellor from 1810 until his death in 1822, a body of administrators set out to revive Prussian power by overhauling its institutions. Essentially, their reforms were designed to strengthen the Prussian state in order to free the kingdom from French domination. The aim was to give Prussians some rights, freeing them from the restrictions of a hierarchical society, so that they were able to develop their talents and contribute to the common good. Hardenberg advised Prussian King Frederick William III in 1807, 'we must do from above what the French have done from below':

- Serfdom was abolished and peasants were liberated from the remnants of the old feudal order. Peasants were now free subjects before the law, able to own property and to marry as they wished, and free to move and to practise any trade or profession.
- In 1810, the power of the Prussian guilds was broken.

KEY TERM

Landwehr A reserve army, made up of men who are partially but not necessarily fully or recently trained.

- Church lands were secularised.
- Military reformers Gerhard Scharnhorst and Carl August von Gneisenau reorganised the army. The officer corps was purged. Henceforward, commissions were to be awarded by competitive examination. Universal military training was introduced, with training in a professional army on a rolling programme. Men served for 30 months then joined the **Landwehr** – a reserve force. (This system ensured that the Prussians were able to keep their treaty with France while in reality evading its restrictions.) Soldiers were no longer subjected to inhuman punishment.
- The government was overhauled to provide a more efficient central authority. The civil service was thrown open to men of all classes.
- Wilhelm von Humboldt, Prussian minister of education, introduced major reforms in the education system. Determined that education should not be the preserve of a small elite, Humboldt introduced elementary schools for all children. Those who were able could go on to secondary schools. Humboldt also introduced state certification requirements for teachers, and established the University of Berlin, in 1810.
- Towns were given elected municipal councils.

Stein had envisaged the creation of an elected national assembly but this was a step too far for the Prussian king and aristocracy. Nevertheless, the reforms, according to historian Kitchen, were ‘astonishing and rapid’. They ensured that Prussia would become the most modernised state in Germany.

The War of Liberation

In 1812, Napoleon invaded Russia with an army of over 600,000 men, a third of whom were German. The campaign was a disaster. Napoleon lost over 500,000 men. This weakened his grip on Europe. The heavy losses angered Germans.

Popular anti-French opinion encouraged King Frederick William III of Prussia to ally with Russia against France in January 1813. Responding to patriotic enthusiasm, Frederick William called for a people’s war of liberation. In June, Austria also declared war on France. In October, the three allies defeated Napoleon at the Battle of Leipzig (sometimes called the Battle of Nations) – Europe’s greatest and costliest land-battle of the nineteenth century. (Both sides lost 60,000 men.) Within a few months the allied armies invaded France, occupied Paris and forced Napoleon to abdicate.

This so-called War of Liberation has often been seen by historians as the first collective action of the German nation. Certainly, for some Prussian patriots, the war was a struggle of the German people against a foreign tyranny, a struggle that they hoped would result in the rebirth of a German empire. A ‘free corps’ of German student volunteers, led by the Prussian officer Adolf von Lützow, captured popular imagination. The black-clad troops, under their black, red and gold banner, seemed akin to a German army. Baron vom Stein, who had become an advisor to Russian Tsar Alexander I, drafted the text of the Proclamation of Kalisch, which outlined allied war aims. They included the re-establishment

of a reformed German empire with a **constitution** that would reflect the ‘quintessential spirit of the German people’ and the freedom of the German princes and people.

Prussian troops played a crucial role when Napoleon returned from exile in 1815. A Prussian army, led by Gebhard von Blücher, and an Anglo-Allied army, led by the Duke of Wellington, defeated Napoleon at the Battle of Waterloo. The battles of Leipzig and Waterloo offered all Germans a rallying point of pride and enthusiasm.

Later romantic **nationalist** myths about the war bore little relation to reality, however. Most Germans were indifferent to calls for a popular rising against France. Moreover, King Frederick William of Prussia and other German princes remained suspicious of a national movement which might ‘overheat’ the people and get out of control. Most Prussian leaders were Prussian – not German – nationalists. Thus, Germany’s future was decided, not by German patriots, but by the particular interests of Prussia and Austria.

The Vienna peace settlement

Nationalists’ hopes that a powerful united Germany would arise from Napoleon’s defeat were dashed at the Congress of Vienna. In 1814–15, German unification was not a practical proposition. Too many deep-seated divisions stood in the way of national unity. Perhaps the most important was the rivalry between Austria and Prussia. These two states were obvious competing candidates for the control of any united Germany. However, at this stage, they were content to coexist in what Austrian Foreign Minister Metternich called ‘peaceful dualism’. Both were among the **Great Powers** who drew up the peace treaty at the Congress of Vienna in 1815. Not surprisingly, both benefited substantially from the Vienna peace settlement.

Austrian gains

Most of Austria’s territorial gains came in Italy, not Germany. Austria secured Lombardy and Venetia in northern Italy, while Habsburg rulers were restored to the central Italian duchies of Parma, Modena and Tuscany.

Prussian gains

Prussia gained considerable territory, including part of Saxony, the Rhineland, Westphalia and Pomerania (see Figure 2.1, page 12). Prussia’s population was more than doubled to 10 million. The sudden increase in size brought problems. The Catholic Rhinelanders resented being annexed to Protestant Prussia, from which they were separated by more than 80 km (50 miles) and with which they had little in common. Prussia was similarly reluctant to take the Rhineland. It would have preferred to take the whole of Saxony and/or more Polish territory. Moreover, Prussia was now lumbered with the task of defending Germany’s borders against any resurgence of French military might. Nevertheless, the Congress of Vienna considerably strengthened Prussia’s role in Germany.

KEY TERMS

Constitution A set of rules by which a state is governed.

Nationalist Someone who favours or strives after the unity, independence, interests or domination of a nation.

Great Powers Europe’s strongest nations in 1814–15 were Britain, Russia, Austria, Prussia and France. The first four countries had allied together to defeat France.

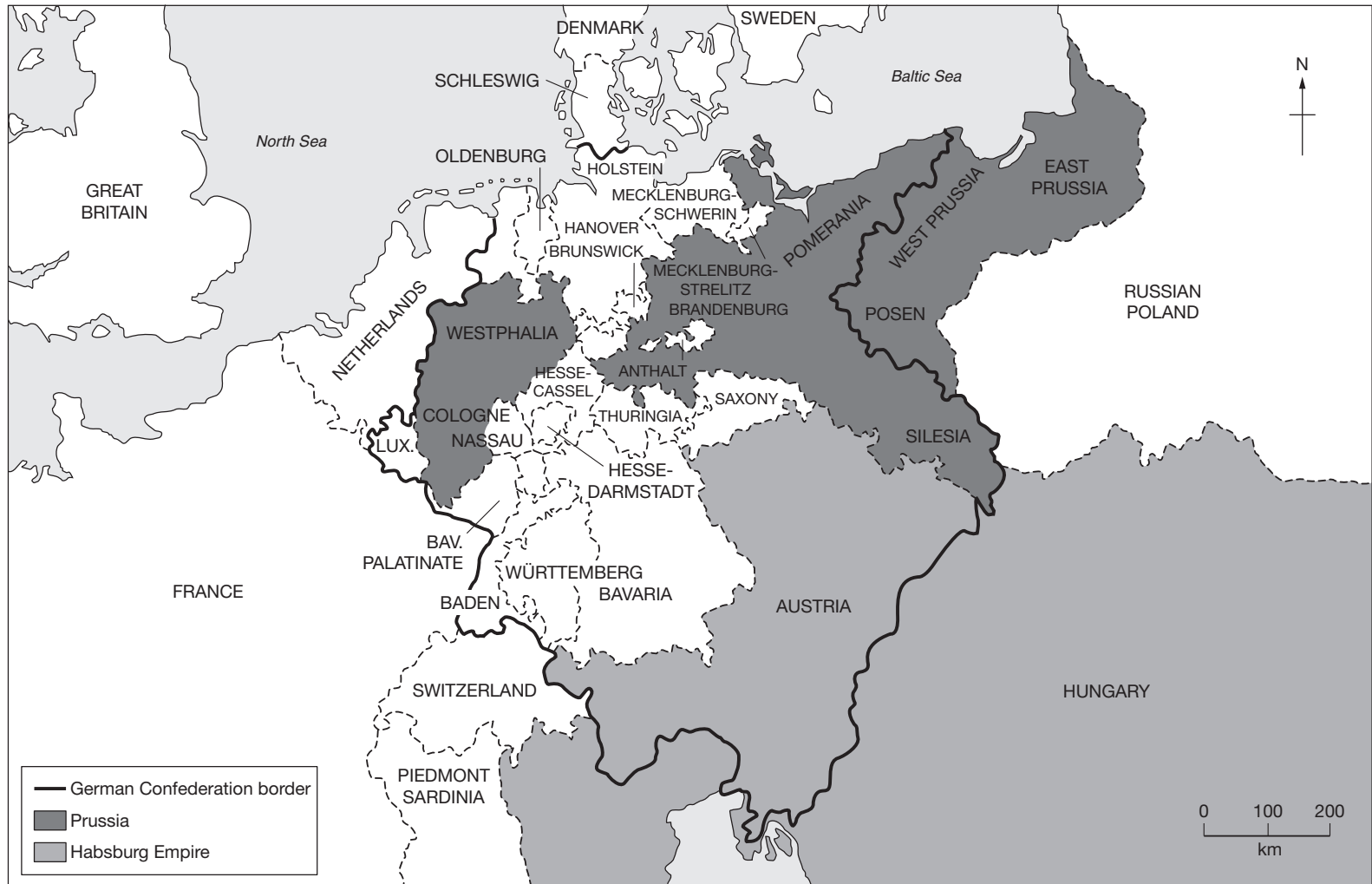


Figure 2.1 Germany in 1815.

Metternich's influence at Vienna

Although Prussia emerged as the big German winner from Vienna, this was not apparent at the time. This was largely because Austria's political influence at the Congress (and thereafter) was greater than that of Prussia. The most important influence on the future of the German states in 1814–15 was that of Prince Metternich, Austria's chief minister. Metternich's aim was the maintenance of Austria's traditional authority over the German states. He was not concerned with German political unity, and his negotiations at Vienna ensured that Germany would become a loose confederation of states under Austrian control.

The German Confederation

In June 1815, the German Confederation, comprising 39 states, was established by the Congress of Vienna. Its declared aim was to maintain 'the external and internal security and the independence and integrity of the individual states'. It thus sought to uphold the **status quo** in individual states through a system of mutual assistance in times of danger, such as internal rebellion or external aggression. The Confederation was not concerned with promoting a united Germany. In fact, its aim was exactly the opposite, for none of the rulers of the separate states wished to see his independence limited by the establishment of a strong central German government.

The boundaries of the Confederation were modelled on those of the old Holy Roman Empire rather than on ones that would encourage the development of a German nation-state. Areas peopled by Poles, Czechs, Danes and French were included and provinces with largely German-speaking populations were excluded. States such as Luxembourg, Hanover and Holstein, which were ruled by foreign monarchs (the Dutch king ruled Luxembourg, the British king Hanover and the Danish king Holstein), were within the Confederation while parts of German-speaking Austria and Prussia were not.

The *Bundestag*

The Confederation had only one **executive** body, the *Bundestag* or Federal Council, which met at Frankfurt am Main. This was a permanent conference of representatives, who were not elected but were sent by their governments with instructions how to act. It was to be presided over by the Austrian representative, in recognition of the imperial power traditionally held by the Habsburg emperors. Given that the agreement of every state government was required before any measure could be passed, little was ever achieved. Representatives were more concerned with safeguarding the interests of their own states than working for the Confederation as a whole.

The weakness of the Confederation

The Confederation had very little control over the 39 individual states, apart from being able to prevent their making foreign alliances which might threaten the security of the Confederation, or concluding separate peace agreements in the event of the Confederation being involved in war. The constitution of the

KEY TERMS

Status quo The existing condition or situation.

Executive The power or authority in government that carries laws into effect.

ONLINE EXTRAS
OCR

WWW

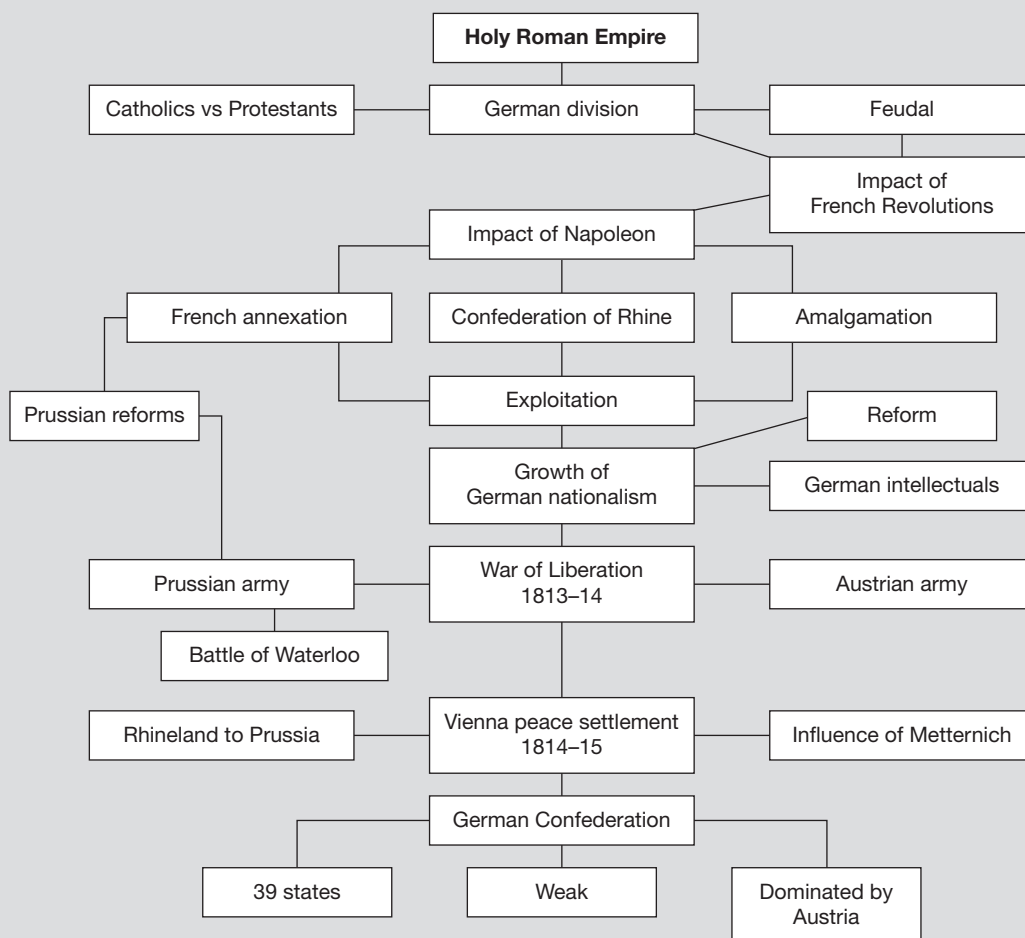
Worksheet 1 at www.hoddereducation.co.uk/accessstohistory/extras helps you to understand Napoleon's role in unifying Germany by asking you to create an essay plan.

Confederation, the Federal Act, had empowered the *Bundestag* to organise a federal army and to develop commercial and economic cooperation between the states, but local jealousies and fiercely guarded independence meant that nothing of importance was done to unify the Confederation militarily or economically. The defence of the Confederation depended on the continued cooperation of Austria and Prussia.

The Confederation thus disappointed those Germans who hoped for greater national unity. It has also been criticised by historians who see it as being essentially the Holy Roman Empire mark II – an organisation which had no place in the age of emergent nation-states. However, the Confederation at least provided a framework within which German states coexisted, albeit uneasily.

SUMMARY DIAGRAM

THE IMPACT OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION AND NAPOLEON



2 Reform and repression 1815–40

■ *Why was the period from 1815 to 1840 one of repression?*

The years 1815–48 are often called the *Vormärz* or pre-March (a prelude to the March revolutions in Berlin and Vienna in 1848; see pages 39–40). Associated with the Austrian statesman Metternich, the *Vormärz* is usually seen as a period of reaction and repression. But liberal and nationalist views survived the repression and had growing support.

German constitutions

Absolute rule was restored in most German states in 1815. All but four were **dynastic** states: monarchies, duchies and **principalities**. However, one of the Articles of the Federal Act laid down that the ruler of each state should sooner or later give his subjects a ‘Constitution of Regional Estates’, that is, some kind of parliament. The response varied:

- Some rulers totally ignored the Article.
- Most north German states allowed the ‘estates’ to meet. These ‘estates’ were traditional representative bodies, not always elected, and usually composed largely of nobles.
- In southern and central Germany there was more compliance with the Federal Act.

Between 1818 and 1820, Bavaria, Baden, Württemberg and Hesse-Darmstadt introduced constitutions that created elected assemblies. These assemblies had the power to make laws and control taxation, powers which could not be ignored. However, suffrage was based on strict property requirements, which meant that only a small portion of the male population could vote. Moreover, the assemblies had limited influence. The monarchs continued to appoint their own ministers and retain real power. Nevertheless, most governments did their best to avoid confrontation with the assemblies.

Developments in Austria and Prussia

Little was done to encourage democratic reform in Austria. The Austrian kings, Francis I (1804–35) and his mentally disabled successor Ferdinand I (1835–49), wished to maintain their absolute power. The old provincial *Diets* were eventually revived, but only as a means of preserving the existing social order. They were dominated by the local aristocracy.

Austria, virtually bankrupt in 1815 and chaotically administered, was in need of reform. But those in power (Metternich dominated foreign affairs, his rival Franz Kolowrat dominated domestic affairs), fearing upheaval, prevented any major

KEY TERMS

Absolute rule A state where a single person or group has total power.

Dynastic Ruled by the same family.

Principalities States ruled by a prince.

changes after 1815. Austria remained an inefficient police state in which the aristocracy retained its privileges.

In Prussia, King Frederick William III (1797–1840) showed little interest in liberal reform. After 1815, Prussia was a patchwork of disparate territories, divided culturally, religiously and economically. The country was divided into provinces, each with a president, appointed by the central government in Berlin. Each province enjoyed a high degree of independence and each maintained its own distinct identity. Although Frederick William III did agree to set up provincial estates with limited advisory powers in 1823, these were controlled by large landowners. Prussia remained a state without a constitution until 1848.

Monarchical rule

The majority of German rulers, following the lead of Austria and Prussia, clung obstinately to their absolute power. Noble families continued to wield huge influence. However, many states emerged from the years of war with better organised and stronger **bureaucracies**. This was the result of French occupation, imitation of French methods, or simply financial necessity. The bureaucracies were active in a host of areas: economic, legal and educational. They ensured, for example, that educational provision in Germany was the best in Europe.

KEY TERMS

Bureaucracies Systems of administration.

Multinational Austrian Empire The Austrian Empire contained people of many different nationalities. Although a relatively small minority, the Germans were the dominant ethnic group within the empire.

The influence of Metternich

Metternich believed that the maintenance of international peace was directly linked with the prevention of revolution in individual states. What happened inside one state was of concern to other states, and entitled them to intervene if they considered it necessary. The social order had to be defended against the forces of destruction. For Metternich these forces were liberalism and nationalism. If these – in his view – revolutionary ideas spread, they could lead to the overthrow of absolute monarchy and the end of the **multinational Austrian Empire**. He, therefore, opposed any constitutional change, however modest.



SOURCE QUESTION

According to Source B, why did Metternich oppose democracy?

SOURCE B

Metternich's views on democracy, quoted in Guillaume de Bertier de Sauvigny, *Metternich and his Times*, Darton, Longman & Todd, 1962, p. 39.

It is true that I do not like democracies. Democracy is in every case a principle of dissolution, of decomposition. It tends to separate men, it loosens society. I am opposed to this because I am by nature and by habit constructive. That is why monarchy is the only government that suits my way of thinking ... Monarchy alone tends to bring men together, to unite them in compact, efficient masses, and to make them capable by their combined efforts of the highest degree of culture and civilisation.

German liberalism and nationalism

Many liberal Germans opposed Metternich's conservatism. Most liberals wanted:

- parliamentary rule
- freedom of speech
- freedom of the press
- freedom of worship
- freedom to form political associations and hold political meetings
- a united Germany.

Liberals were almost exclusively well-educated, well-to-do members of the middle class who, fearful of the excesses of the French Revolution, had no wish to bring about radical changes in the structure of society. Few supported a universal **franchise**. They believed that only men of property should be entitled to the vote. Most were opposed to violence and hoped to achieve their aims by intellectual argument and peaceful persuasion.

Virtually all German liberals were nationalists. They wanted to establish a strong German state. However, there was little agreement about how this state would be organised and what would be the relative roles of Austria and Prussia.

It is difficult to know how far liberal and nationalist ideas filtered down from the educated minority to the rest of the population. For many ordinary Germans, nationalism had arisen simply as a resentment of French rule. Once French occupation ended, nationalist sentiment declined. Local patriotism and regionalism remained strong.

In some cases, well-meaning liberals set up study groups in German cities, hoping to attract the support of workers. Moreover, groups were sometimes formed by workers themselves. These groups tended to be more radical. Their politics often became democratic rather than liberal, centred on the **sovereignty** of the people rather than on the sovereignty of parliament, on a republic rather than a monarchy, and on violence rather than on peaceful means to obtain their ends. But however enthusiastic these groups were, they involved only a small proportion of urban workers and hardly any agricultural workers.

Student movements

In the years after 1815, thousands of young middle- and upper-class Germans, hoping to give practical form to their romantic sense of national identity, joined student societies and campaigned for a united Germany and abolition of absolutist forms of government.

In October 1817, some 500 nationalist students converted the Wartburg Festival from a celebration of the tercentenary of Luther's stand against the pope (see page 2) and the fourth anniversary of the victory of Leipzig into a demonstration against the princes (see Source C, page 18). Metternich was horrified when

KEY TERMS

Franchise The right to vote.

Sovereignty Supreme power.



SOURCE QUESTION

Do you think the artist who drew Source B was sympathetic with the students? Explain your answer.

SOURCE C



This print published in 1817 shows a procession of students on their way to the Wartburg Festival.

he received reports of the Wartburg Festival. Convinced that the student societies posed a serious threat, he requested that universities should be placed under close supervision. But he met resistance from several German states who resented any encroachment on their sovereignty that such a step would inevitably involve.

The Carlsbad Decrees

In 1819, a member of an extreme student society murdered August von Kotzebue, a German dramatist who was also one of the Russian tsar's informers on German affairs. This murder prompted Metternich to take action. After consulting the Prussian king, he summoned representatives of the German states to meet him at Carlsbad. Their decisions were ratified by the *Bundestag* as the Carlsbad Decrees. The Decrees:

- provided inspectors for universities
- ensured that student societies were disbanded
- threatened radical university lecturers with dismissal
- introduced press censorship
- set up a commission to investigate 'revolutionary' movements
- allowed the Confederation to intervene in any state that refused to implement these measures or which was threatened by revolution.

Clemens von Metternich

| | |
|----------------|---|
| 1773 | Born into nobility in the Rhineland |
| 1794 | Family moved to Vienna to escape a French invasion of the Rhineland |
| 1809 | Became foreign minister of Austria |
| 1814–15 | Played a key role at the Vienna peace settlement |
| 1821 | Became Austrian chancellor |
| 1848 | Forced to resign; fled to England |
| 1859 | Died |

Metternich was a complex individual. Vain and arrogant, he was also extremely able. In 1819, he said: 'There is a wide sweep about my mind. I am always above and beyond the preoccupations of most public men; I cover a ground much vaster than they can see or wish to see. I cannot keep myself from saying about twenty times a day: "O Lord! How right I am and how wrong they are."'

Although confident in his own abilities and ideals, he was pessimistic about the future: 'My life has coincided with a most abominable time ... I have come into the world too soon or too late. I know that in these years I can accomplish nothing ... I am spending my life underpinning buildings which are mouldering into decay.'

Opposed to democracy, Metternich believed that popular challenges to legitimate authority would result in chaos, bloodshed and an end to civilisation. His single-mindedness prompted contemporaries

to speak of a 'Metternich System' and historians have subsequently found this a useful concept to help to analyse his actions. Some think his 'System' was based on a complex philosophy. Others, like A.J.P. Taylor, have doubted whether there was a 'System', believing that Metternich was simply a traditional conservative with no profound philosophical beliefs. His main aims were simply to maintain the Austrian Empire, maintain the traditional order in Europe and maintain himself in office.

Given the nature of the Austrian Empire, the extent to which Metternich was actually in control within the Habsburg lands can be questioned. His influence in other German states and across Europe as a whole was even more limited. Recently, historian Wolfram Siemann (2019) has questioned whether Metternich was really a reactionary. Siemann sees him more as a progressive conservative who believed in freedom and the rule of law, and was opposed to absolute rule by monarchs or dictators. According to Siemann, 'Metternich had more than enough ideas for how the [Austrian] empire might be led into a more prosperous future in which the rule of law would be strengthened and political participation increased – carefully, however, through negotiation and compromise, through an evolutionary and not a violent or revolutionary path.' Above all, given his experience of two decades of revolutionary war, he was desperate to maintain peace.



Implementation of the Decrees varied in severity from state to state. In Austria and Prussia, a number of professors were dismissed and radical student leaders imprisoned. It seemed that **reactionary** forces had triumphed. It also seemed that the sole purpose of the Confederation was to crush radical dissent. Metternich tried to go further still, stopping the movement for constitutional reform and revoking some of the more progressive south German constitutions. His efforts were frustrated by opposition from Württemberg, Bavaria and Saxony-Weimar.

KEY TERM

Reactionary Opposing political or social change and wanting to maintain the *status quo*.

The Congress of Troppau

Metternich supported the idea of European Congresses – meetings of the Great Powers to discuss and settle international disagreements and maintain peace. At the Congress of Troppau in 1820, discussion centred on revolutions which had broken out in Spain, Portugal, Piedmont and Naples. Tsar Alexander I,

in sympathy with Metternich's reactionary beliefs, put forward a proposal that Russia, Austria and Prussia should act jointly, using force if necessary, to restore any government which had been overthrown by violent action. The proposal was accepted and in the Protocol of Troppau, Russia, Austria and Prussia – the Holy Alliance – announced that they 'would never recognise the rights of a people to restrict the powers of their king'. This ran directly contrary to the ambitions of liberals and nationalists everywhere, and was particularly disappointing to those in the German states. Both Prussia and Austria were firmly ranged on the side of reaction.

Repression in the 1820s

As well as the weapons of diplomacy and threats of force, Metternich used those of the police state to maintain the existing political and social conditions. A special office was set up in Vienna to open, copy and then reseal foreign correspondence passing through Austria. This gave Metternich an enormous amount of information and it was backed up by reports from his network of spies throughout Europe and by the work of his secret police. His efforts to turn the Confederation into a police state were only partially successful. Repression and press censorship varied in severity from state to state. Nevertheless, Metternich was generally successful in keeping Germany (and indeed much of Europe) quiet throughout the 1820s.

KEY TERM

July Revolution in Paris

In 1830, the reactionary King Charles X of France was overthrown and replaced by the more liberal Louis-Philippe.

Liberal reform in the 1830s

The **July Revolution in Paris** of 1830 led to a series of uprisings across Europe. Demonstrations and riots also took place in several south German states. The demands were for a constitution as laid down in the Federal Act of 1815; or, if a constitution already existed, for its liberalisation.

- In Brunswick, the Duke was driven out and his successor was forced to grant a more liberal constitution.
- In Saxony and Hesse-Cassel, more liberal constitutions were obtained.
- In Bavaria, Baden and Württemberg, liberal opposition parties gained parliamentary seats and greater freedom of the press allowed criticisms of the government.
- In Hanover, the government granted a constitution in 1832.

The growth of German nationalism in the 1830s

In the early 1830s, there was a profusion of folk festivals, especially in south-west Germany. The numbers who attended such festivals suggest that the idea of establishing a German nation-state had considerable support. In 1832, some 30,000 people – artisans, peasants and students – met at the Hambach Festival in the Palatinate to talk, listen to nationalist orators and (in some cases) plan revolution (see Source D, opposite). Those attending waved black, red and yellow

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