

Chapter I

GERMANY IN 1815

(1) POLITICAL DIVISIONS¹

Almost the only form of unity which Germans possessed in the eighteenth century was that of language and culture, and even this was no strong bond. It was not an easy matter for Germans to understand each other's dialects. Since Luther's day the written language had been more stable. Lessing may perhaps be regarded as the first of the modern German dramatists and critics, and by 1790 Germany was on the eve of her great age of literary achievement. The influence of French culture in Germany was very strong in the eighteenth century. Frederick the Great himself normally spoke and wrote in French. He was proud to have Voltaire at his court. His palace and grounds at Sans Souci were modelled on Versailles. Germany had no religious unity such as Catholic France and Protestant England possessed, for North Germany was Protestant; Austria, South Germany, the Rhineland and Silesia were predominantly Catholic.

Politically, too, there was little unity. In the eighteenth century Germany was divided into over three hundred States—Kingdoms, Electorates, Duchies, Imperial Cities, ecclesiastical territories, estates of Imperial Knights and many more. They varied in size from Great Powers like the Hapsburg Empire and Prussia to insignificant Principalities like Reuss-Greiz, Reuss-Schleitz, Reuss-Gera and Reuss-Lobenstein. Their territories were scattered. Thus Prussia only succeeded in joining East Prussia to Brandenburg and Pomerania in 1772 and Austria had territories on the Danube, the upper Rhine² and in the Nether-

¹ See map 1. ² The Breisgau on the right bank of the upper Rhine.

lands.¹ It was common for States to enclose completely territories belonging to other sovereigns. The confusion was worst in Central Germany and in the valleys of the Rhine and Danube. In theory this motley collection of States did not enjoy complete independence, their rulers owing allegiance to the Holy Roman Emperor. But by the end of the eighteenth century this had become little more than a formality. The German States in fact acted as sovereign States. The Holy Roman Empire was a mere shadow—a weak and ridiculous institution, flouted on every hand and fit only for the gibes of Voltaire.

During the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars Germany was overrun by the French and her antiquated political and social institutions were swept aside sometimes by the conquerors and sometimes by the Germans themselves. The Holy Roman Empire came to an end. The lands of the Imperial Knights, the Imperial Cities and the Church were absorbed by other States. Under Napoleon's influence Germany was organised in three parts. In the north-east was Prussia, ruthlessly reduced in size by the loss of all her territories lying west of the Elbe and of her share of the second and third partitions of Poland. In the south, Austria was less harshly treated but she lost her possessions in the Netherlands, on the Rhine and Danube and also Tirol and Vorarlberg. The other German States, nominally independent but actually under French control, were united in the Confederation of the Rhine (*Rheinbund*). The southern members—Bavaria, Württemberg and Baden—had their possessions increased and were much more compact than before. The northern members were, to a great extent, new States like Westphalia and Berg, set up by Napoleon.

After the defeat of Napoleon in 1814 and 1815, Germany's political structure was again reorganised. It was, of course, impossible to reintroduce the chaotic conditions of the eighteenth

¹ The Austrian Netherlands covered much of the territory now held by Belgium and Luxemburg but were divided into two parts by the territories of the Bishop of Liège which stretched from the Dutch frontier across the Meuse to the French frontier at Givet.

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century. The German States now numbered only thirty-eight.¹ The Holy Roman Empire was not set up again but its place was taken by the Germanic Confederation (*Deutscher Bund*). Only four of the free cities were revived—Frankfurt-am-Main and the three Hansa towns (Hamburg, Bremen and Lübeck). No restoration of the ecclesiastical States was made. The three southern States were not reduced to their previous limits, though Bavaria had to return Vorarlberg and Tirol to Austria. This is significant, for the southern States—especially when supported by Austria—proved to be a barrier to the attainment of German unity under Prussian leadership. It should be observed, too, that many of Napoleon's valuable social and legal reforms in the Rhineland and South Germany remained.

In other respects Napoleon's work was swept aside. French expansion eastwards was checked. France had annexed all German lands west of the Rhine and north of a line drawn from the junction of the Rhine and Lippe to Travemünde on the Baltic. All this was lost in 1814. Saarbrücken, Saarlouis and Landau, which France had been allowed to retain, were taken from her in November 1815 after the Hundred Days. The States that Napoleon had set up in the north of Germany dis-

¹ Thirty-eight in 1815; thirty-nine in 1817 when Hesse-Homburg became a member of the Confederation. Between 1817 and the dissolution of the Confederation in 1866 the number of members was reduced to thirty-three:

1825–26. When the Sachse-Gotha line died out its territories were divided between the Duke of Sachse-Coburg (thereafter Duke of Sachse-Coburg-Gotha), the Duke of Sachse-Meiningen (thereafter Duke of Sachse-Meiningen-Hildburghausen) and the Duke of Sachse-Hildburghausen (thereafter Duke of Sachse-Altenburg).

1847. Anhalt-Köthen dynasty died out and its territories went to Anhalt-Dessau.

1849. Princes of Hohenzollern-Hechingen and Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen ceded their sovereign rights to Prussia.

1863. Anhalt-Bernburg dynasty died out and its territories went to Anhalt-Dessau.

1886. Hesse-Homburg dynasty died out and its territories went to Hesse-Darmstadt.

appeared. Hanover recovered her independence and had more extensive territories than in the eighteenth century. Prussia secured her old German territories and some Polish lands and added to them substantially.

In 1815 Austria was the most powerful of the German States. The Hapsburg Empire had no racial unity but it did possess a certain measure of economic and geographical unity.¹ It included the whole of the middle Danube basin. Its “natural” frontiers were the Alps, the mountains surrounding the Bohemian Plain, the Carpathians, the Transylvanian Alps and the Dinaric Alps. The Hapsburgs had expanded beyond those limits. From the Alps they had descended to the fertile valley of the Po, from the Carpathians to the upper Vistula. So Austria was interested in Italian, Polish and Balkan problems. She had, however, withdrawn from the Rhine and had left to Prussia the defence of Germany’s western frontier. Austria’s representative presided over the deliberations of the German Federal Diet at Frankfurt-am-Main and in the years that followed the Napoleonic Wars her policy of repressing Liberal sentiments in Germany triumphed. The South German States and many of the small States of Central Germany looked to Austria as their protector against Prussian aggression. But Prussia, under Frederick William III, was more interested in maintaining “law and order” in Germany in co-operation with Metternich than in attempting to emulate Frederick the Great by challenging Austria’s position of supremacy in Germany.

Prussia was, after Austria, the largest and most powerful of the German States. Most of her population were Germans and she was more closely identified with German interests than Austria. It is true that she held the two Polish provinces of Posen and West Prussia and was thus to some extent a Slav State—but not nearly to the same extent as she would have been if she had retained the vast Polish territories that she had

¹ R. Sieger, “Die geographischen Grundlagen der Österreich-ungarischen Monarchie...”, in *Geographische Zeitschrift*, XXI (1915), pp. 1–22, 83–105, 121–31.

governed between 1795 and 1806. In the eighteenth century the Hapsburgs, by their possessions on the Rhine and in the Netherlands, might have attempted to check French expansion eastward but they had failed to prevent the loss of Lorraine and had allied themselves with the French in the hope of defeating Frederick the Great and so recovering Silesia which he had seized in 1742. Prussia, under Frederick the Great, had beaten the French at Rossbach. Under the leadership of Stein and his successors she had recovered from the crushing defeat of Jena-Auerstädt and had taken an honourable part in the War of Liberation. In 1815, by acquiring the provinces of Westphalia and the Rhineland, Prussia became Germany's chief bulwark against French aggression. Her territories were rather more than 100,000 square miles in extent—about half the size of France—and her population numbered some ten millions. Yet Prussia failed for many years to take that place in German affairs to which her history, geographical position, size and population entitled her. Frederick William III and his ministers were generally content to follow Metternich's lead. In economic matters, however, Prussia adopted a policy of her own which ultimately led to the establishment of a large measure of economic unity in Germany.

Prussia's territories were divided into two parts. Her eastern possessions stretched from Memel at the mouth of the Vistula to Mühlhausen at the south of the Harz Mountains. There were seven provinces in this part of the Prussian dominions—East Prussia, West Prussia (which were combined into one province between 1824 and 1878), Posen, Pomerania, Brandenburg, Saxony and Silesia. Some of these provinces were larger than they had been in the eighteenth century. Swedish Pomerania (*Neu Vorpommern*) and the island of Rügen had been added to Pomerania. Saxon territories annexed in 1815 were divided among three Prussian provinces. Lower Lausitz was added to Brandenburg, part of upper Lausitz to Silesia and territories further west to the new province of Saxony. This province was not compact but was nearly cut in two by Anhalt.

The western possessions of Prussia stretched from the Dutch frontier to Bingen and from Trier on the Moselle to Minden on the Weser. They were composed partly of Church lands once ruled by the Bishops of Münster, Osnabrück, Paderborn, Cologne and Trier. They included the Ruhr district which was later to become so important an industrial centre. In 1815 these territories were divided into three provinces—Westphalia, the lower Rhine and Jülich-Cleves-Berg—but in 1824 the two last named were joined to form the new Rhineland Province. The eastern and western portions of Prussia were divided by Hesse-Cassel, Brunswick and the southern portion of Hanover.

While in the eighteenth century it had been Prussia's ambition to add to her dominions the Polish "corridor" which divided East Prussia from Brandenburg and Pomerania, in the nineteenth century Prussia wished to join her eastern and western provinces at the expense of States like Hanover and Hesse-Cassel. Economic union was secured in 1831 when Hesse-Cassel joined the Zollverein and was consolidated in 1854 on the adhesion of Hanover. Political union was not achieved until 1866¹ when, after the Seven Weeks War, Prussia annexed not only Schleswig-Holstein but Hanover, Hesse-Cassel, Nassau and Frankfurt-am-Main.

There were several German States of moderate size (the middle states)—Hanover, Saxony, the two Mecklenburgs, Oldenburg, Schleswig and Holstein north of the River Main and Bavaria, Württemberg and Baden south of the Main.

¹ Between 1815 and 1866 Prussia's territorial acquisitions were small and did not assist in joining her eastern and western provinces—Lichtenberg (purchased from the Duke of Sachse-Coburg-Gotha, 1834), Hohenzollern-Hechingen and *Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen (joined Prussia voluntarily, 1849), Lippstadt (1850), Wilhelmshaven (purchased from Oldenburg, 1854) and Lauenburg (annexed 1865). The connection of the Swiss district of Neuchâtel (Neuenburg) with the Prussian monarchy ceased in 1857.

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Hanover, the largest of the North-German middle States, fell into three geographical divisions—the main part of the Kingdom which lay between the North Sea and the Harz Mountains, the territory lying in the valley of the Ems between Emden and Osnabrück,¹ and the district south of the Harz Mountains which was cut off by Brunswick from the rest of the country.

The Kingdom of Saxony was compact. It had lost territory in 1815 but retained the important commercial city of Leipzig and was soon to become the most industrialised of the middle States. Mecklenburg-Schwerin was a small but compact State lying between the Elbe and the Baltic. Mecklenburg-Strelitz was situated on the upper Havel south-east of Mecklenburg-Schwerin.² The Duchies of Schleswig and Holstein were joined to the Crown of Denmark by a personal union. Holstein was in the German Confederation but Schleswig was outside. Oldenburg lay to the west of the Weser and stretched from the North Sea nearly as far south as the Prussian province of Westphalia.

South Germany, once a medley of scattered territories, now had only three States of importance—Bavaria, Württemberg and Baden. Bavaria had mountain frontiers in the east (the Bohemian Forest) and south (the Bavarian Alps). To the north it stretched beyond the Main. Separated from the main part of Bavaria was the Bavarian Palatinate which lay on the left bank of the Rhine. Württemberg lay in the upper Neckar valley. It reached to the Lake of Constance in the south and had the hills of the Black Forest as its western frontier. Baden occupied the narrow strip of land between the Rhine and the Black Forest. In the south-west its territories reached the western end of Lake Constance: in the north-east they stretched across the Neckar.³

¹ This part of the King of Hanover's dominions was joined to the main portion of the country only by a narrow strip of marshland.

² A fragment of Mecklenburg-Strelitz lay adjoining the western frontier of Mecklenburg-Schwerin.

³ On the upper Danube were the two small Principalities of Hechingen and Sigmaringen which were governed by Catholic Hohenzollern rulers.

In Central Germany there were a number of moderate-sized and small States. Many of them had scattered fragments of territory which were enclaves in other States. Brunswick's territories were thus scattered. Two principal districts may be distinguished. One, in the Harz Mountains, cut off Göttingen from the main part of Hanover. The other district contained the capital and lay east and south of the River Aller, a tributary of the Weser. Lippe-Detmold lay to the west of Brunswick and was surrounded on three sides by Prussian territory.

The three Anhalt Duchies (Dessau, Köthen and Bernburg) stretched across the Elbe and were almost entirely surrounded by Prussian territory. Hesse-Cassel (Electoral Hesse) lay on the upper Weser. Hesse-Darmstadt (Grand Duchy of Hesse) was in two chief parts, one lying north and the other south of the River Main: they were divided by the territory of Frankfurt-am-Main and of Hesse-Cassel. Nassau, though small, was compact and lay on both sides of the River Lahn.

The Thuringian States were on the upper Werra and upper Saale and their territories were mixed up together in a state of almost incredible confusion. They included the territories of the Ernestine line of the Wettin family,¹ the lands of the senior² and junior³ branches of the Reuss family and the Principalities of Schwarzburg-Rudolstadt and Schwarzburg-Sondershausen. They had only two institutions in common—a court of appeal and the University of Jena. But in Karl August of Sachse-Weimar, Thuringia had a ruler who, by calling Goethe and Herder to his court, had made Weimar for a time one of the greatest cultural centres of Germany.

There were also four free cities in Germany—Hamburg, Bremen, Lübeck and Frankfurt-am-Main. Hamburg territory outside the city included several neighbouring villages, the district of Cuxhaven-Ritzebüttel at the mouth of the Elbe and the island of Neuwerk in the North Sea.

¹ Sachse-Weimar, Sachse-Gotha, Sachse-Meiningen, Sachse-Hildburghausen and Sachse-Coburg.

² Reuss-Greiz.

³ Reuss-Lobenstein, Reuss-Schleiz and Reuss-Ebersdorf.

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Although the political map of Germany had been much simplified, frontiers were still very confused in some parts of the country, particularly north of the Main between the Rhine and Elbe. Within a few miles of Frankfurt-am-Main, for example, were the territories of five different States, so that the city in which the Diet of the Germanic Confederation met came to be an asylum for “all the rascals of central Germany; anyone who was ejected over the Hesse-Darmstadt frontier entered by another gate after a short walk through Homburg or Nassau...”¹

In these circumstances it is hardly surprising that Germans themselves were sometimes none too clear about the political geography of the Fatherland. The statesmen assembled at Vienna in 1815 failed to make Hesse-Homburg a member of the Confederation because they forgot all about her. Later, when some of the smaller States of Central Germany were trying to come to an agreement to build new roads it was found, after some months, that one of the frontiers they had been discussing was different from what they had all along assumed.² These conditions obviously hampered German commerce. The great rivers and the chief roads generally crossed numerous frontiers where delays occurred and dues had to be paid. Hanover, for example, levied duties at Stade which bore heavily on goods going up the Elbe.

The government of the various German States was, for the most part, in the hands of the princes and the landed aristocracy. Only in the South German States, in some of the smaller States of Central Germany, and in the free cities had parliamentary institutions developed to some extent, and here the middle classes were not without influence in public affairs. In the Hapsburg Empire and in Prussia there were no national parliaments, the only representative assemblies being provincial

¹ H. von Treitschke, *Deutsche Geschichte im neunzehnten Jahrhundert*, II (1927), p. 379.

² P. Thimme, *Strassenbau und Strassenpolitik in Deutschland zur Zeit der Gründung des Zollvereins, 1825–35* (1931), p. 26.

estates. Not until 1847 were the separate Diets of Prussia brought together in a United Diet. Saxony and Hesse-Cassel had medieval estates until 1831 and the two Mecklenburgs preserved them until the end of the Great War!

The German States were united in a Confederation. Prussia's Polish provinces (West Prussia and Posen) and East Prussia as well as most of the Hapsburgs' non-German lands were excluded. The Confederation was a *Staatenbund* and not a *Bundesstaat*—that is to say, it was a union of sovereign States in which unanimity was essential before joint action could be taken and it was not a federation of States in which the members gave up some of their sovereign rights to the central power. The Diet of the Confederation was a meeting of delegates who voted according to their instructions: it was not a parliament in which members voted without consulting their constituencies. The delegates at Frankfurt-am-Main had, indeed, the privileges of ambassadors. It was obviously difficult for an assembly so constituted to work effectively.

(2) ECONOMIC CONDITIONS¹

The lack of effective political unity in Germany and the strength of the spirit of particularism in 1815 help to explain the economic backwardness of the country in comparison with Britain or France. Voltaire had declared that Germany was condemned to eternal poverty,² and conditions after the

¹ See A. Sartorius von Waltershausen, *Deutsche Wirtschaftsgeschichte, 1815–1914* (1923), part i; Werner Sombart, *Die deutsche Volkswirtschaft im neunzehnten Jahrhundert* (6th edition, 1923), book i; Josef Kulischer, *Allgemeine Wirtschaftsgeschichte...*, II (1929), book iv; J. H. Clapham, *The Economic Development of France and Germany, 1815–1914* (4th edition, 1936), chs. ii and iii; Pierre Benaerts, *Les Origines de la Grande Industrie allemande* (1932), ch. iii; Carl Brinkmann, "The Place of Germany in the Economic History of the Nineteenth Century", in *Ec.H.R.* iv (April, 1933); and W. O. Henderson, "The Rise of German Industry", *Ec.H.R.* v (April, 1935), pp. 120–4.

² H. Feis, *Europe the World's Banker* (1930), p. 60.