

HIS 102--04 Prussia © February 27, 2000

Raymond J. Jirran

A. Introduction

Just as Russia straddles Asia and Europe, so do the Germanies straddle western and central Europe.¹ That line basically extends from the Adriatic Sea, east of Venice to the Baltic Sea, west of Berlin. While the rise of the common people was the guiding light for studying Russia, the course goal for this topic is **to evaluate the legitimation of human rights in the Germanies.**

B. General Setting

Though France remained dominant, in the last half of the Seventeenth Century, a shuffling of the political pecking order happened. The political positions once occupied by Sweden, Poland, and Holland were taken over by Britain and Prussia. Both diverged strikingly from the static Old Regime in France. The years 1640-1688 were decisive for both Britain and Prussia in defining the constitutional and social balance of each. In Britain during the Seventeenth Century, there was a Cromwellian revolution from below. In Prussia, there was a revolution from above.

C. Chronology

In 1688, Frederick III took over the Hohenzollern lands. In order to entice Frederick to participate in the War of the Spanish Succession² against France, Leopold I granted Frederick the title "King in Prussia." Leopold I of the House of Habsburg ruled from 1658 until 1705 as the Holy Roman Emperor. When Frederick died in 1713, he was known as King Frederick I. This meant that the next Frederick William would be King Frederick William I.

Frederick William I is known as the Father of the Modern Prussian army and the German General Staff. When Frederick William I died in 1740, his son, "Little Fitz" took over. See "Map 17.2 Prussia and the Austrian Empire, 1721-1722 and the Habsburg Empire," in the seventh edition of Chambers on page 619.³ Note: Brandenburg, Silesia, Bohemia, Austria, and Hungary.

D. Policies

1. Foreign

Frederick the Great (1740-1786) ruled the Germanies⁴ until just before the French Revolution. In the first year of his reign, Frederick stole Silesia from the young Maria Theresa of Austria. The ensuing War of the Austrian Succession lasted in Europe from 1740 until 1748. In the colonial United States, the War of the Austrian Succession was known as King George's War. With the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, (ak-sla-sha-pel), Frederick got to keep Silesia. Soon another war began, the Seven years War (1756-1763), known in what was to be the U.S.A. as the French and Indian War. This time Frederick was literally surrounded by his enemies: Austria, France, Russia, Sweden, and Saxony. Still, he held his own and managed to keep Silesia.

By 1772, the other nations seemed to have learned their lessons and would not fight with Frederick. In fact, the Austrian and Russian monarchs joined with Frederick in the first partition of Poland. Two other partitions within ten years after the death of Frederick⁵ completed the dismemberment of Poland. These treaties compose some of the dastardliest deeds in Western civilization.

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Hesse-Cassel⁶ is a little German state known in the U. S. for the nearly twenty thousand Hessian mercenaries who fought as Hessians for the British during the American Revolution. The local significance is that these Hessian mercenaries did the actual fighting for the French at Yorktown. That fact is generally unrecognized by historians. Such trafficking in soldiers enriched the treasury of Hesse-Cassel so as to free the state from the exigencies imposed on larger realms.

Historians wonder what the absolute kings, such as those in Prussia, were doing as the Enlightenment developed. It does seem that while these regal rulers were open to the ideas of the Enlightenment, pragmatic dictates limited their options. This is not a matter of the good Enlightenment versus the bad kings, but rather a matter of good and bad and of Enlightenment and monarchy accommodating each other within the circumstances of the times.⁷

2. Domestic

By the time of his death, Frederick had almost doubled the size of Prussia. A deist, he tolerated at least the Catholics, if not the Jews, in Protestant Prussia. He abolished the use of torture. He encouraged the colonization of desirable immigrants in Prussia. He reclaimed waste lands in the Oder River Valley and built canals. He adopted an anti-laissez-faire economic policy with the high import duties which fostered wool, textile, and other industries. He also reformed the civil court system of Prussia.

The net result was that by the end of the reign of Frederick the Great, Prussia differed less from the other states of continental Europe than before. Some of those differences, however, were important. The Thirty Years War, ending with the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, weakened the middle class, which never quite recovered. Compared with the rest of Europe, German religion was both more vital and more rational. The Enlightenment had a very limited impact in the Germanies, which gave rise to philosophical and political romanticism and, eventually, a deep German pessimism. As has been stressed, the sense of German nationality developed slowly.

Industrialism in the Germanies made up for its lateness by its quickness within an authoritarian political structure. While accepting industrialization, that political structure resisted modernization. This meant that there developed deep social divisions and ideological tensions in the Germanies. Karl Marx came out of this milieu.⁸

E. Conclusion

The student has focused on Prussia. The student has noted how law and order, strength and discipline, brute force and steadiness of purpose all contributed to the political success of Prussia. All of these forces operated outside the framework of democracy, thus demonstrating that democracy was not necessary to the political success experienced by Prussia. In this way, the student is better able to evaluate the legitimation of human rights in the Germanies. Students are reminded to read, study, think, and prepare a comment.

Supplement

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F. United States Comparisons

Although the King was tolerant, localities were not. Raison d'être or reason of state guided princes, but not the middle classes and not the commoners. For example, in Hamburg the rights of Jews and Calvinists to worship in public were repeatedly denied. That meant that in order to get married in the sight of a non-tolerated institutional religion, one had to go to Denmark, which guaranteed religious freedoms to all. As late as 1719, an anti-Catholic riot occurred in Hamburg. Between the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia and the end of the Holy Roman Empire in 1806, the tension was between intolerance and gradual toleration. By 1806, gradual toleration won out. Such toleration is in the spirit of the U. S. A and of truth determining politics.⁹

Several more comparisons are of special importance to U.S.A. students. The Germanies developed a bureaucratic tradition quite in contrast to the Anglo-American world. Apparently, discrimination against women in Germany was "more stubborn and protracted than in the advanced Western countries."¹⁰

Many Germans emigrated from the Germanies to the United States. By the mid-Eighteenth Century, a group of German merchants was specializing in the immigrant traffic. Nineteenth Century German laws designed to stem emigration, had the opposite effect, by giving prospective migrants the promise of greater safety and security from abuse.¹¹

Once in the United States, Germans tended to drop their German language in favor of English. Religious practice was an exception. If the German language served a religious purpose, the German was preserved. Religious, class, and geographic divisions among the Germans contributed to the decline of the language. To Dr. Jirran this seems similar to what happened to the languages from the continent of Africa.¹²

Just as Black literature has been neglected, so has German-American literature. The number of United States citizens claiming German as a mother tongue almost doubled between 1960 and 1970. This seems more a matter of willingness to admit the German background than an influx of German-speaking people. There are many German language American newspapers awaiting examination by historians.¹³

G. German Militarism

Having lost two world wars, the Germans remain convicted of militarism, without the benefit of trial, at least in the opinion of Dr. Jirran. As one scholar puts it, "unfortunately, this issue remains unresolved."¹⁴ German militarism is rooted in the eastward expansion of the German peoples during the Middle Ages. During the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, militarism became more formalized in the Prussian alliance between crown, nobility, and army. The bourgeoisie did not participate, until the latter part of the Nineteenth Century.¹⁵

When the bourgeoisie participated in militant nationalism, following the ravages of Napoleon, the stage was set for the Twentieth Century debacle. The growing destructiveness of military technology made the militarist pursuit of war dysfunctional. After World War II, the militarist tradition was rejected.

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H. Dates

A little bit of a chart can help learn the dates. This is a reference chart for what appears in the notes, or two page lectures, which are meant to be known.

	Treaty of Westphalia--1648		
	War of Devolution--1667-1668		
	War of the League of Augsburg--1689--1697		
<u>Prussia</u>		<u>Austria</u>	
Frederick III (King in Prussia) Ed.) ¹⁶	1688-1713 1701-1713	Leopold I (pages 585, 519, 590-591, 592M, 7th	1658-1705
Frederick William I	1713-1740	Charles VI (page 596, 7th Ed.) ¹⁷	1685-1711-1740
(Father of the Modern Prussian army)		Pragmatic Sanction 1713	
Frederick II (The Great)	1712-1740-86	Maria Theresa	1717-1740-1780
War of the Spanish Succession or the War to save the Pyrenees or Queen Anne's War			1701-1713
War of the Austrian Succession or King George's War			1740-1748
Seven Years War or the French and Indian War			1756-1763

Comments on the Seventh Edition of Chambers, pages 590-598

In the opinion of the professor, Chambers is the most scholarly textbook on the market. Chambers well represents mainstream thinking in the history profession. The professor, however, disagrees in many significant ways with mainstream thinking. Some of these disagreements are set forth above and others in the following comments.

Page	Column	Paragraph	Line
0593	2	3	11-12 "... the Prussian State Library ..."

A sign that the state is supporting truth over politics.

Endnotes

¹ Since the Second World War and the creation of West Germany, West Germany has become considered part of the West. Historically, however, West Germany is part of central, rather than Western, Europe.

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² Queen Anne's War, 1701-1713, Topic 4, "Louis XIV," indicates this war began in 1701. Actually, there is some controversy over whether what happened in December 1701 actually began the war or not. Interested students are invited to develop a definitive answer which ended in the Treaty of Utrecht. *The Concise Columbia Encyclopedia: Third Edition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), page 316 uses 1702.

³ See "Map 18.2 Prussia, 1721-1722 and the Habsburg Empire," in the fifth edition of Chambers on page 716; in the sixth edition, "Map 17.2" on page 570; in the seventh edition, "Map 17.5" on page 619.

⁴ From 1740 until 1786, to be exact, but this date is not included in the lecture proper because the more general "until just before the French Revolution" is both more meaningful and more able to be learned.

⁵ In 1793 and 1795.

⁶ Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary (1986), under Geographical Names lists Hesse as a region in central West Germany, divided into Hesse-Darmstadt to the south and Hesse-Cassel to the north. Hesse-Cassel, along with the duchy of Nassau and the city of Frankfurt am Main, was united with Prussia in 1866 as part of the province of Hesse-Nassau.

⁷ John G. Gagliardo, review of Charles W. Ingrao, The Hessian Mercenary State: Ideas, Institutions, and Reform under Frederick II, 1760-1785 in The American Historical Review, Vol. 94, No. 1 (February 1989): pages 162-163.

⁸ Jurgen Kocka, review of Gordon A. Craig, The Germans, The American Historical Review, 88, (December 1983): 1281-1282.

⁹ Helen Liebel-Weckowicz, review of Joachim Whaley, Religious Toleration and Social Change in Hamburg, 1529-1819 in The American Historical Review, 93?? (October 1988??): 1225.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, citing page 147 in Craig.

¹¹ Thomas J. Archdeacon, review of Frank Trommler and Joseph McVeigh, eds., America and the Germans: An Assessment of a Three-Hundred-Year History. Volume I. Immigration, Language, Ethnicity in The American Historical Review, Vol. 95, No. 5 (December 1990), pages 1612-1613.

¹² Thomas J. Archdeacon, review of Frank Trommler and Joseph McVeigh, eds., America and the Germans: An Assessment of a Three-Hundred-Year History. Volume I. Immigration, Language, Ethnicity in The American Historical Review, Vol. 95, No. 5 (December 1990), page 1613.

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¹³ Thomas J. Archdeacon, review of Frank Trommler and Joseph McVeigh, eds., America and the Germans: An Assessment of a Three-Hundred-Year History. Volume I. Immigration, Language, Ethnicity in The American Historical Review, Vol. 95, No. 5 (December 1990), page 1613.

¹⁴ Michael Geyer, review of Emilio Willems, A Way of Life and Death: Three Centuries of Prussian-German Militarism; An Anthropological Approach in The American Historical Review, Vol. 93, No. 1 (February 1988), page 169.

¹⁵ Michael Geyer, review of Emilio Willems, A Way of Life and Death: Three Centuries of Prussian-German Militarism; An Anthropological Approach in The American Historical Review, Vol. 93, No. 1 (February 1988), pages 168-169.

¹⁶ Page 540 in the sixth edition; pages 585, 519, 590-591, 592M in the seventh.

¹⁷ Page 561 in the sixth edition; page 596 in the seventh.