

The EMPIRE GERMANY WON — and LOST



AFTER five and a-half years of fruitless war, the German nation today finds itself just about where it began eighty years ago. Militarism placed it on the path to power. Militarism has led it back to the penury. The great Bismarck, by means of intrigue and skilful strategy, built up the German Empire. The fanatical Hitler, through trust in bluff and reckless naivety, has ruined the German Reich.

In the winter of 1861 a new sovereign, William I, came to the Prussian throne. He was elderly, a soldier, and an autocrat with a great dislike for popular movements. He wanted Prussia to be strong in arms.

His first act was to press for compulsory service and the addition of more regiments to the Prussian army. Parliament rejected the scheme, and there was a protracted deadlock until Otto von Bismarck came to the side of the King. Bismarck was a Pomeranian squire who had been ambassador at Paris and St. Petersburg. He was a man of passionate and ruthless temperament, a powerful orator and a subtle diplomat. With the advent of Bismarck the struggle over military reform became more embittered. Restrictions were placed on the liberty of the press, liberal officials who protested that military, financial and foreign policy should be governed by the will of the people, were dismissed.

The inevitable consequences of the rejection of their claim was the conversion of Europe into an armed camp. Bismarck liked respected Englishmen, but he knew that English

principles of government transplanted to Prussia would spell ruin for his ambitions. He was able to lead the King step by step in the direction he considered right.

At the beginning of his administration Bismarck's whole design was threatened by a proposal from Austria for the reformation of the German Federal Constitution. It needed repairing badly enough, but that plan was far too likely to result in the strengthening of Austrian authority in Germany; so Bismarck frustrated it. He wanted the way kept clear for German unity under Prussian influence. Within three years he had decided it was necessary for his plans to pick a quarrel with Austria and force a war. With engaging candour he admitted in later years that "Prussian linen was not always of the cleanest". The war with Austria lasted seven weeks and Europe was amazed at the results attained by the application of Prussian science and Prussian methods to the military art. In the third week the Austrian army was crushed at Sadowa in Bohemia. Bismarck saw that Austrian alliance or neutrality might some day be precious to his state, and so he was content when they acquiesced in Prussian domination of the Danish Duchies and in the formation of a North German Confederation under Prussian leadership. He was considerate of the South German States' desire to form