Otto von Bismarck

Wilhelm I

- Friedrich Wilhelm IV fell ill → Wilhelm I (brother)
  - Becomes regent in 1858
  - Ascended to throne in **1861**
- Accepted constitution
- Very focused on military

Prussian military

- 1859
  - Franco-Austrian War
  - Prussian army mobilised to deter possible French moves in Rhineland → Brought attention to weaknesses of army
- State of the army (before)
  - Professional army
    - Traning
      - **150,000 soldiers**
      - **40,000 men per year**
      - **2 years training**
      - **2 years in reserve**
      - Officers were Junkers
  - **Landwehr**
    - Semi-civilian militia force
    - **Liberal midde-class men**
    - Limited training
    - Officers not professionals
- Wilhelm's plans (after)
  - Increase budget — Required **25% tax increase**
  - **Double army size** — **300,000**
  - Training
    - **63,000 men anually**
    - **3 years training**
    - **5 years in reserve**
  - **Merge Landwehr with army**

Landtag

- Constitution required that taxes be agreed by the Landtag
- Majority liberals — Disliked Wilhelm's plans
  - Stronger army could suppress them
  - Landwehr dominated by liberal men
- **German Progressive Party**
  - 1861 agreed to vote funds for only one year
  - New elections - won **40%** seats (May 1862)
- **September 1862**
  - Landtag does not approve tax rise
  - Wilhelm crisis - considered abdication

Bismarck's appointment

Last resort

- Background
  - Conservative
    - Junker family — But middle-class mother
    - Loyal to monarchy
    - Defended monarchy in 1848 — Mobilised peasants
  - Personality
    - Short-tempered, reckless, arrogant, prejudiced, extreme
    - Cunning, pragmatic
    - Confident, defiant, strong-willed, loyal to Prussia — Openly smoked in Diet of Confederation even though only allowed for Austrian chancellor
    - Manipulative — Pushed policies against king's wishes
  - Career
    - Studied law
    - Ambassador
      - Russia 1859
      - Paris 1862
  - Attitude towards unification
    - Planner or opportunist?
    - **"Realpolitik"** (Practical politics) — Politics based on **power** rather than ideals
- Called to be Minister-President by Wilhelm
  - Albrecht von Roon minister of war recommended
  - **September 1862**

Bismarck's actions

- **30 September 1862** — **"Iron and blood" speech** (Blut und Eisen)
  - Affirms
    - Unity
    - Importance of army — Prussia can be a leader through its power, not through its ideology
  - Message to liberal nationalists
    - They have a common goal
    - 1848 acknowledgement - simply done wrong
    - Slight insult to liberals - weak democratic means
- Collected taxes without Landtag — Anti-constitutional
- Liberals' reaction
  - Humiliated (anti-democratic measures)
  - Hopeful (Bismarck and nationalists same goal)

  Gained 40% seats 1863 but did not stop Bismarck

Prussian army

- Reforms
- Army leaders
  - **Helmuth von Moltke**
    - Chief of general staff
    - Modernised methods of training, use of railway...
  - **Albrecht von Roon** — Minister of war

"The position of Prussia in Germany will not be determined by its liberalism but by its power ... Prussia must concentrate its strength and hold it for the favorable moment, which has already come and gone several times. Since the treaties of Vienna, our frontiers have been ill-designed for a healthy body politic. Not through speeches and majority decisions will the great questions of the day be decided - that was the great mistake of 1848 and 1849 - but by iron and blood (Eisen und Blut)."

~OTTO VON BISMARCK

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