

#107 The French Connection – The Birth of the Second Reich: The Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71

The Birth of the Second Reich. Now is the time to cover the birth of what came to be referred to as the Second Reich in Germany's history. [Why we are covering this subject matter at this time is because the birth of the Second Reich German Empire would draw America closer to France in an unusual way – that way being the Statue of Liberty.]

The Franco-Prussian War began in 1870 as the result of a dispute between France and Prussia, a German state. Leading up to the war, there existed many independent German states, though a number were in a union called the German Confederation. Prussia was the most powerful German state. Otto von Bismarck, Prussia's Prime Minister, hoped to strengthen the unity of the German states by having them fight a war against France. In turn, France desired to humiliate Prussia. An excuse for war was easily found.

The Germans were entirely victorious. The French had to yield the city of Paris to the Germans in early 1871. The war ended with the Treaty of Frankfurt, signed on May 10, 1871. The treaty provided that France would give most of Alsace and Lorraine to Germany, pay Germany one billion dollars, and support a German army of occupation until the sum was paid. Germany expected the huge debt to handicap France for many years. Instead, the French miraculously paid it off in less than three years.

Creation of a new German Empire. The result of the Franco-Prussian War was the abolishment of what was called the North German Confederation (of German states), and the creation of a new German Empire, later called the Second Reich, under the leadership of Prussia. It helped set the stage for World War I by increasing French and German hostility.



Proclamation of the German Empire

Key Understanding: *The war between the western part of the Charlemagne Split (France) and the eastern part of the Charlemagne Split (Germany). The Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871 was reflective of the conflict between the western part of the Charlemagne Split (France) and the eastern part of the Charlemagne Split (Germany). The powerful German state of Prussia unified all of the German states and built the Second Reich, or Bismarckian German Empire, in preparation for World War I. Thus the Second Reich of Germany only lasted from 1871 to 1918.*

Below is a map illustrating the unifying of the German states by Prussia into the German Empire



Here is #107–Doc 1, another map illustrating the unifying of the German states by Prussia into the German Empire.

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