

Bismarck history

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INTRODUCTION The battleship Bismarck was named in honour of Otto Fñrst von Bismarck, the architect of German unification and the arbiter of European politics during the second half of the 19th century. Bismarck, also known as the "Iron Chancellor", was the founder and first chancellor of the German Empire, and through his diplomatic skills, he managed to maintain the peace in Europe for a generation.

EARLY LIFE AND CAREER Otto von Bismarck was born on 1 April 1815 at Schñnhausen in Brandenburg, Prussia. His father, Ferdinand von Bismarck-Schñnhausen, was of the Old Prussian nobility. His mother, Wilhelmine Mencken, from the upper bourgeoisie. He studied law at the University of Gottingen in Hanover, and obtained his degree in 1837 and then entered the Prussian civil service. After leaving the service he helped manage the family estates. He entered politics & married Johanna von Puttkammer in 1847. During the revolutions of 1848, Bismarck favored suppression of revolt and opposed any concessions to the liberals, staying loyal to the monarchy & was determined to free the states from Austrian domination and to unite them under Prussian rule. In 1849, he was elected to the Prussian Chamber of Deputies (the lower chamber of the Prussian Diet). In 1851, Frederick William IV appointed Bismarck as the Prussian representative to the federal Diet in Frankfurt. In 1859, Bismarck was sent to Russia as Prussian ambassador to St. Petersburg, and in May 1862, he moved to Paris as ambassador to the court of Napoleon III. Soon after he returned to Berlin, on 22 September 1862, Bismarck became minister president and foreign minister for the Prussian king William I (Wilhelm I).

GERMAN UNIFICATION In 1864 Prussia allied with Austria to provoke war with Denmark. The victorious allies won the duchies of

Schleswig and Holstein, but two years later quarrels over the duchies led to war between Prussia and Austria. The defeat of Austria gave Prussia control over the states north of the Main River. Bismarck formed them into the North German Confederation. Relations between Prussia and its age-old enemy France then became tense. In 1870 the nomination of a Hohenzollern prince to the vacant Spanish throne was withdrawn upon French demand. When the French ambassador asked King William I of Prussia to promise that the nomination would never be renewed, the king dismissed the ambassador. France then declared war on Prussia, and the Prussian army, with the armies of the other German states, attacked and defeated the disorganized French (see Franco-Prussian War). The German states were then united, and William I became Kaiser, or emperor, of the new German Empire. Bismarck, raised to the rank of prince, became the imperial chancellor (Reichskanzler). IMPERIAL CHANCELLOR As German chancellor, Bismarck directed his foreign policy at maintaining and strengthening the power of the German Empire. In order to prevent a war of revenge, Bismarck decided now to isolate France diplomatically. In 1873, he formed the Three Emperors' League (Dreikaiserbund) with Russia and Austria-Hungary. But rivalry in the Balkans provoked the Russo-Turkish War of 1877, and Bismarck had to mediate at the Congress of Berlin in 1878, successfully maintaining the peace. Increasing Russian hostility brought about the Dual Alliance with Austria (1879), and then the Triple Alliance when Italy joined in 1882. Bismarck, however, sought to tie Russia to this alliance by reviving the Three Emperors' League (1881-87) through the Reinsurance Treaty (1887-90). He also gained British cooperation. During Bismarck's chancellorship, Germany established

colonies in Africa and in the Pacific and built up its industries. William I was succeeded in 1888 by his son Frederick III, a sick man who ruled only three months. Frederick's son became Kaiser William II. Because William II wanted sole power, he forced Bismarck to resign in 1890. Bismarck retired to his estate at Friedrichsruh, where he died on July 30, 1898 at the age of 83.