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Germany and America, Julius Friedrich Sachse's History of the German Role in the Discovery, Exploration, and Settlement of the New World.

Frederick II, the Great, of Prussia – 1763 Germany, or more exactly the old Holy Roman Empire, in the 18th century entered a period of decline that would finally lead to the dissolution of the Empire during the Napoleonic Wars. Since the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, the Empire had been fragmented into numerous independent states *Kleinstaaterei*. From 1701, King Frederick William I, also known as the "Soldier King", established a highly centralized state. The term German dualism describes the long conflict between the two largest German states Austria and Prussia from 1740 to 1806 when Prussia finally forced Austria out of the German Confederation. The Kingdom of Prussia emerged as the leading state of the Empire. Since there was only one King of the Germans within the Empire, Frederick gained the assent of Emperor Leopold I in return for alliance against France in the War of the Spanish Succession to his adoption January of the title of "King in Prussia" based on his non-imperial territories. The title came into general acceptance with the Treaty of Utrecht. The Hohenzollerns of Brandenburg had held the reversion to the Duchy of Pomerania since 1648. During this time, the trends set in motion by the Great Elector reached their culmination, as the Junkers, the landed aristocracy, were welded to the Prussian Army. Using the pretext of a treaty vetoed by Emperor Ferdinand I, by which parts of Silesia were to pass to Brandenburg after the extinction of its ruling Piast dynasty, Frederick invaded Silesia, thereby beginning the War of the Austrian Succession – 1763. In 1763, Frederick invaded again to forestall reprisals and to claim, this time, the province of Bohemia. The situation became progressively grimmer until the death of Empress Elizabeth of Russia the miracle of the House of Brandenburg. This gave the start to the rivalry between Prussia and Austria for the leadership of Germany, referred to as German dualism. Including All the States Comprehended Under that Name with the Kingdom of Prussia, CE From 1776, against resistance from the nobility and citizenry, an "enlightened absolutism" was established in Prussia and Austria, according to which the ruler was to be "the first servant of the state". The economy developed and legal reforms were undertaken, including the abolition of torture and the improvement in the status of Jews; the emancipation of the peasants began. In 1795, Prussia took part in the partitions of Poland, occupying western territories of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, which led to centuries of Polish resistance against German rule and persecution. To the east and south of Prussia, the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth had gradually weakened during the 18th century. Frederick took part in the first of the partitions of Poland, between Russia, Prussia, and Austria in 1772. The Kingdom of Prussia annexed most of the Polish province of Royal Prussia, including Warmia; the annexed land was organized the following year into the Province of West Prussia. After Frederick died in 1786, his nephew Frederick William II continued the partitions, gaining a large part of western Poland in 1793. In 1795, the Kingdom of Poland ceased to exist and a large area including Warsaw to the south of East Prussia became part of Prussia. The French Revolution sparked a new war between France and several of its Eastern neighbors, including Prussia and Austria. Napoleon I of France relaunched the war against the Empire. In 1806, under the "Reichsdeputationshauptschluss" a resolution of a committee of the Eternal Imperial Diet meeting in Regensburg, he abolished almost all the ecclesiastical and the smaller secular states and most of the imperial free cities. New medium-sized states were established in south-western Germany. In turn, Prussia gained territory in north-western Germany. Politics[edit] After 1806, Prussia became a European great power. The Peace of Westphalia in 1648 strengthened it even further, through the acquisition of East Pomerania. From 1701, King Frederick William I, also known as the "Soldier King", established a highly centralized, militarized state with a heavily rural population of about three million compared to the nine million in Austria. In terms of the boundaries of 1806, Germany in 1806 had a population of 16 million, increasing slightly to 17 million by 1815, and growing more rapidly to 24 million by 1871. Wars continued, but they were no longer so devastating to the civilian population; famines and major epidemics did not occur, but increased agricultural productivity led to a higher birth rate, and a lower death rate. This gave the start to the rivalry between Prussia and Austria for the leadership of Germany. From 1806, against resistance from the nobility

and citizenry, an "enlightened absolutism" was established in Prussia and Austria, according to which the ruler governed according to the best precepts of the philosophers. The economies developed and legal reforms were undertaken, including the abolition of torture and the improvement in the status of Jews. Emancipation of the peasants slowly began. Compulsory education was instituted. In Prussia and Austria took part in the partitions of Poland. Prussia occupied the western territories of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth that surrounded existing Prussian holdings, while Austria took the territory of Galicia further south. This occupation led to centuries of Polish resistance against Germanization. The existence of the two big powers precluded a serious reform of the confederate structure of Germany; but reform of the individual state governments and administrations was not excluded. The general picture was as varied as the political map of the Holy Roman Empire, and it is difficult to generalize. But the impression prevails that, overall, after and especially after 1789, the general situation of the middle classes improved slightly, both economically and politically. Reforms were carried in a number of large and small states. There were some profligate, vicious and dull-witted rulers, but there were also some outstanding personalities. The bureaucrats, if often corrupt, were more competent and better educated than before. Bavaria was especially unfortunate; it was a rural land with very heavy debts and few growth centers. Among the smaller princes, many offensive characters could be found, but also many of outstanding figures, such as Duke William Ferdinand of Brunswick and Margrave Karl Friedrich of Baden. Under the rule of Karl Friedrich, an enthusiast for The Enlightenment, Baden enjoyed some of the best governments of the smaller states. Serfdom was abolished in 1783, although this was done primarily to avert peasant unrest and the flight of unfree Baden peasants to neighboring Breisgau after Joseph II abolished serfdom in that Austrian province in 1785. Conditions in these ecclesiastical principalities were no less variegated than those of the secular states. All the bishops were scions of the ruling dynasties or the high aristocracy and they considered themselves political rulers who lived and acted in the style of the contemporary secular court society. Their sense of responsibility and their capacity for the administration of their territories also varied greatly. However, even at their best, they could not achieve the continuity of government that some dynastic states began to acquire. He combined Enlightenment ideas with Christian values, cameralist plans for central control of the economy, and a militaristic approach to diplomacy. George III, elector ruler from 1737 to 1806, never once visited Hanover. Nobility[edit] In a heavily agrarian society, land ownership played a central role. Increasingly after 1789, a centralized Prussian government based in Berlin took over the powers of the nobles, which in terms of control over the peasantry had been almost absolute. To help the nobility avoid indebtedness, Berlin set up a credit institution to provide capital loans in 1780, and extended the loan network to peasants in 1785. When the German Empire was established in 1871, the Junker nobility controlled the army and the Navy, the bureaucracy, and the royal court; they generally set governmental policies. In most of Germany, farming was undertaken by tenant farmers who paid rents and carried out obligatory services to the landlord, who was typically a nobleman. Peasant leaders supervised the fields and ditches and grazing rights, maintained public order and morals, and supported a village court which handled minor offenses. In Prussia, the peasants drew lots to choose conscripts required by the army. The noblemen handled external relationships and politics for the villages under their control, and were not typically involved in daily activities or decisions. The nobles approved; for now they could buy land owned by the peasants. The chief reformer was Baron vom Stein, who was influenced by The Enlightenment, especially the free market ideas of Adam Smith. A bank was set up so that landowner could borrow government money to buy land from peasants the peasants were not allowed to use it to borrow money to buy land until 1785. The result was that the large landowners obtained larger estates, and many peasants became landless tenants, or moved to the cities or to America. The other German states imitated Prussia after 1789. In sharp contrast to the violent events of the French Revolution, Germany handled land reform peacefully. In Schleswig the peasants, who had been influenced by the Enlightenment, played an active role; elsewhere they were largely passive. Indeed, for most peasants, customs and traditions continued largely unchanged, including the old habits of deference to the nobles whose legal authority over the villagers remained quite strong. Although the peasants were no longer tied to the land, the old paternalistic relationship in East Prussia lasted into the 20th century. They abolished feudal obligations and divided collectively owned common land into private parcels; and thus created a more efficient

market-oriented rural economy; resulting in higher productivity and population growth. It strengthened the traditional social order because wealthy peasants obtained most of the former common land, while the rural proletariat was left without land; many left for the cities or America. Meanwhile, the division of the common land served as a buffer preserving social peace between nobles and peasants. Before , the German upper classes often looked to France or, previously, Italy for intellectual, cultural and architectural leadership; French was the language of high society. Christian Wolff " was the pioneer as a writer who expounded the Enlightenment to German readers; he legitimized German as a philosophic language. Weimar Classicism "Weimarer Klassik" was a cultural and literary movement based in Weimar that sought to establish a new humanism by synthesizing Romantic, classical, and Enlightenment ideas. The movement, from until , involved Herder as well as polymath Johann Wolfgang von Goethe " and Friedrich Schiller " , a poet and historian. Herder argued that every folk had its own particular identity, which was expressed in its language and culture. This legitimized the promotion of German language and culture and helped shape the development of German nationalism. German reaction to the French Revolution was mixed at first. German intellectuals celebrated the outbreak, hoping to see the triumph of Reason and The Enlightenment. The royal courts in Vienna and Berlin denounced the overthrow of the king and the threatened spread of notions of liberty, equality, and fraternity. Reformers said the solution was to have faith in the ability of Germans to reform their laws and institutions in peaceful fashion. The alliance also declared that any violation of the borders of the Empire by France would be a cause for war. They demanded that Austria not only disarm but abandon all alliances directed against France. Prussia and Austria ended their failed wars with France but with Russia partitioned Poland among themselves in and The French took control of the Rhineland , imposed French-style reforms, abolished feudalism, established constitutions, promoted freedom of religion, emancipated Jews, opened the bureaucracy to ordinary citizens of talent, and forced the nobility to share power with the rising middle class. Napoleon created the Kingdom of Westphalia " as a model state. When the French tried to impose the French language, German opposition grew in intensity. Napoleon established direct or indirect control over most of western Europe, including the German states apart from Prussia and Austria. The old Holy Roman Empire was little more than a farce; Napoleon simply abolished it in while forming new countries under his control. Its economy was weak, its leadership poor, and the once mighty Prussian army was a hollow shell. Napoleon easily crushed it at the Battle of Jena Napoleon occupied Berlin, and Prussia paid dearly. Prussia lost its recently acquired territories in western Germany, its army was reduced to 42, men, no trade with Britain was allowed, and Berlin had to pay Paris heavy reparations and fund the French army of occupation. Saxony changed sides to support Napoleon and join his Confederation of the Rhine; its elector was rewarded with the title of king and given a slice of Poland taken from Prussia. Major battles followed in quick order, and when Austria switched sides to oppose Napoleon his situation grew tenuous.

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