WHAT OBSTACLES HINDERED GERMAN UNITY IN 1850 AND HOW DID BISMARCK OVERCOME THEM BEFORE 1871?

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At the beginning of the nineteenth century there was a move to greater German unity as a result of growing liberalism and a growing awareness of common nationality among the German people. There were, however, several problems preventing this. One of them was the excessive customs barriers that existed, and although this problem was relatively easily solved, its solution, the Zollverein indirectly caused two much greater problems: the question of Austrian inclusion in Germany and, concurrent to this, the exact territorial composition of Germany. These two closely interwoven problems (were) materialised in the “Grossdeutsch” and “Klein-deutsch” parties and it was these problems which Bismarck set out to resolve.

The creation of the Zollverein in 1834 was the first step towards German unity. It eliminated customs barriers (which caused economic growth to stagnate) and thus promoted National unity. Prussia, who was the driving force behind this scheme, became economically supreme in Germany as a result of it. And consequently Austria began losing her influence, as she did not become a member.

From 1851, when he was elected as the Prussian delegate to the Diet of the German Bund, Bismarck became acutely conscious of the problematic relationship between Austria and Prussia, and became strongly anti-Austrian. From then on he was first and foremost a Prussian nationalist who believed it was in Prussia’s interest to dominate the whole of northern Germany and to exclude Austria from German affairs (Thomson, Europe since Napoleon, p. 319).

In order to secure Prussian domination in Northern Germany, he went to war with Denmark in an Austro-Prussian alliance over the territories of Schleswig and Holstein. Beside the fact that these territories were strategically important to Prussia, it was also desirable for her to be in alliance with Austria “because any Prussian-Austrian settlement over so thorny a problem would leave ample room for picking a quarrel with Austria later whenever he chose.” This then implies that although Prussia got Schleswig and Austria Holstein by the treaty of Gastein in 1865, Prussia had no intention of maintaining this ‘status-quo’.

Bismarck’s next move also proves this: After isolating Austria by treaties with Italy and France he, in June 1866, proposed that the German Bund should be abolished and a new constitution be drafted excluding Austria from German affairs. Austria saw this as a violation of the Treaty of Vienna and the Convention of Gastein and therefore declared war on Prussia. After only three weeks it resulted in defeat for Austria and her German allies. The treaty of Prague concluded the war.

The Austro-Prussian (Seven Weeks’ War) war had two important consequences for Prussia: Austria was now excluded from German affairs and Prussia was finally in control of the north-German states with the gaining of Holstein as well.
It would, therefore, seem fair to assume that the gaining of Schleswig and Holstein, i.e. the securing of Prussian predominance in north-Germany and the exclusion of Austria from German affairs was one coherent plan in the mastermind of Bismarck. Bismarck's initial policy of “Kleindeutschland” had therefore been partly realised.

The only outstanding states now were the south-German ones, and Bismarck seemed determined to obtain these as well for before the Treaty of Prague had even been signed, Bismarck was already signing treaties with Bavaria and other south-German states that opened them to Prussian influence.

As a result of Prussia gaining more territory through the Seven Weeks' War, France felt threatened as the balance of power had now been upset and was against her. Franco-Prussian relations were also deteriorating as a result of Drouyn (the French foreign minister) making territorial demands to Prussia and as a result of France's failed attempt at buying Luxembourg. The break came over the Spanish throne question and Bismarck's editing of the Ems telegram, and on 15 July 1870 France went to war with Prussia. She was however, not well prepared and was crushed by Prussia. On 10 May 1871 the severe Treaty of Frankfurt was signed by which Prussia gained, among others, Alsace and Lorraine.

But Bismarck was advantaged by the French defeat in another way as well: the south-German states were overcome by such a surge of nationalism by the Prussian victory that they joined the German Confederation. Germany was therefore now complete and complete in the way Bismarck wanted it to be, although he did not plan the joining of the south-German states after the war. He did not even plan the Franco-Prussian war; he was merely trying to prevent a possible Prussian embarrassment over the Ems telegram question by going to war with France. "He had neither planned the war nor even foreseen it. But he claimed it as his own once it became inevitable. He wished to present himself as the creator of Germany, not as the man who had been mastered by events." (Taylor, Bismarck, p. 121). But nonetheless in January 1871 the Prussian King was made the Emperor of Germany.

Bismarck therefore unified Germany by overcoming two problems that existed in 1850: the question of Austrian interference in German affairs and the exact territorial composition of Germany. While his plan to gain predominance in north-Germany and to exclude Austria from German affairs was planned, the unification of the south-German states into the German Confederation came about as a result of some quick improvisation and a good deal of luck.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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C.J. Langenhoven

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By die oorgrote meerderheid Suid-Afrikaners bestaan die waarneming dat die vlag en die ander nasionale simbole, sy symbool, met die politiek is. Dit mislukte idee spruit onder meer daaruit dat die simbole se ingewikkelde "geboorte-
geskiedenis" aan leerlinge, selfs leerlinge in die junior primêre fase, opgeës word. Hierdie artikel is juist daarop toegespits om aan te toon hoe 'n persoonlike bewuswording in die betekenis van die vlag, in plaas van die blote kennis ophawe van die ontstaansgeskiedenis daarvan, by leerlinge bewerkstellig kan word.

Die kind behoort allred tydens die junior primêre fase, die simbole van ons vlag te verstaan. Sodoende word 'n riglyk vaagieë waarvolgens die kind self die betekenis daarvan daaglikse in sy of haar lewe kan toepas. Die kind word hierdie geleë tot en met verantwoordelijkheid om die staat as instelling daaglikse te beskerm en uit te bou.

Elke kind en elke mens behoort 'n ideaal te hê om 'n posiwite patriotismie uit te leef. Ek beskou patriotismie as daardie gestemlike van 'n persoon om sy oorlede ondergeskik te wees. Daarom het hierdie idee spruit onder meer daaruit dat die simbole se ingewikkelde "geboortedeskiedenis" aan leerlinge, selfs leerlinge in die junior primêre fase, opgeës word. Hierdie artikel is juist daarop toegespits om aan te toon hoe 'n persoonlike bewuswording in die betekenis van die vlag en die blote kennis ophawe van die ontstaansgeskiedenis daarvan, by leerlinge bewerkstellig kan word.

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Dit is een oppervlakkige opweking van emosionele liefde en trots in jou land nie, maar is gebaseer op 'n beginselvaste strewe na dit wat goed en netjies is in die land as geheel. Daar lê ongelukkig opgeslot in die woord patriotismie heel dikwels 'n baie negatiewe element. Dit is wanneer dit geontr蓓 is op haat en miskenning van ander mense.

Dit behoort die doelstelling van elkeen te wees om patriotismie in die dieper en mooier betekenis na te streef. Daar moet liefde vir dié land, ons vaderland, wees, maar dit moet op suwer lewensbeginsels geordonneer wees. In al die planne en strewes moet 'n deugdaamheid ingeweg word, sodat dié land se belange op die beste manier gedien kan word. Nie net om die vaderland lief te hê nie, maar daar moet altyd gepoog word om net die beste vir die vaderland te gee, al is dit soms noodsaaklik dat ek opoffering moet maak om sodoende die grootste voordeel in my land te verkry.

Daarom is dit so belangrik dat die leerling ons simbole sal verstaan om daardeur prakties geleë kan word tot ware patriotismie. Om slegs 'n klomp kennis aan die leerlinge oor die dwaal voordeel aan dit nooit kan plaasvind nie.

In Suid-Afrika behoort al die simbole ons juist te verenig en nie te verdeel nie. Daarom moet al die politieke hieruit verwyder word en die simbole eerder die rigtinggewende maatskappie wees. Dit moet nie die kind as 'n vervoerwyskod of hoog-aanwagende doek, sonder betekenis beskou word nie, maar eerder betekenis word as iets wat daaglikse op alle terreine van die lewe op eike burger se persoonlike ondersteuning aanspraak maak.

Die voorbeeld wat hierin gebruik word, behoort met vrug in die junior primêre fase gebruik te word. Die inhoud van die begrippe is egter bedoel vir alle leerlinge asook volwassenes.