

Modern History Sourcebook:

Documents of Italian Unification, 1846-61

The Program of Count Cavour, 1846:

The history of every age proves that no people can attain a high degree of intelligence and morality unless its feeling of nationality is strongly developed. This noteworthy fact is an inevitable consequence of the laws that rule human nature. . . .Therefore, if we so ardently desire the emancipation of Italy--if we declare that in the face of this great question all the petty questions that divide us must be silenced--it is not only that we may see our country glorious and powerful but that above all we may elevate her in intelligence and moral development up to the plane of the most civilized nations. . . .This union we preach with such ardor is not so difficult to obtain as one might suppose if one judged only by exterior appearances or if one were preoccupied with our unhappy divisions. Nationalism has become general; it grows daily; and it has already grown strong enough to keep all parts of Italy united despite the differences that distinguish them.

Count Cavour:

Speech to the Piedmont Chamber of Deputies, 1858:

After the disaster of Novara and the Peace of Milan [1849], two courses were open to us. We could, bowing to adverse fate, renounce all the aspirations which had guided King Carlo Alberto during the last years of his reign, seal ourselves up within our frontiers, think only of the material and moral interests of this country [Piedmont-Sardinia]. . . . On the other hand, we could, while accepting all the hardships imposed by accomplished facts, keep alive the faith that inspired the great actions of King Carlo Alberto, and, while declaring our firm intention to respect treaties, maintain in the political sphere the enterprise which was defeated in the military sphere [Italian unification]. . . . In recent years, therefore, we have tried to do away with the last hindrances to our country, and we have lost no occasion to act as the spokesman and defender of the other peoples of Italy. This policy found one such occasion in the Crimean War. . . .Our hopes were not disappointed in regard to the credit that Piedmont would acquire. As for the defense of the rights of Italy, that was our task in the course of the Congress of Paris. . . .it was an outstanding fact that the cause of Italy was for the first time supported by an Italian power.

Report of the meeting of Count Cavour with Emperor Napoleon III of France, 1858:

The Emperor started by saying that he had decided to support Sardinia with all his forces in a war against Austria, provided that the war was undertaken for a non-revolutionary cause, which could be justified in the eyes of diplomacy and still more of public opinion in France and Europe.

Speech of Vittorio Emanuele I, King of Italy, 1861:

Free, and nearly entirely united, the opinion of civilized nations is favorable to us; the just and liberal principles, now prevailing in the councils of Europe, are favorable to us. Italy herself, too, will become a guarantee of order and peace, and will once more be an efficacious instrument of universal civilization. . . . These facts have inspired the nation with great confidence in its own destinies. I take pleasure in manifesting to the first Parliament of Italy the joy I feel in my heart as king and soldier.

Source:

From: D. Zanichelli, ed., *The Writings of Count Cavour* (Bologna, 1892), II:4-50; *The Annual Register or a View of the History and Politics of the Year 1858* (London, 1859), pp. 186-188; Count C. Arrivabene, *Italy under Victor Emmanuel* (London, 1862), I:349-353.

Scanned by Jerome S. Arkenberg, Dept. of History, Cal. State Fullerton

This text is part of the Internet Modern History Sourcebook. The Sourcebook is a collection of public domain and copy-permitted texts for introductory level classes in modern European and World history.

Unless otherwise indicated the specific electronic form of the document is copyright. Permission is granted for electronic copying, distribution in print form for educational purposes and personal use. If you do reduplicate the document, indicate the source. No permission is granted for commercial use of the Sourcebook.

(c)Paul Halsall May1998
halsall@murray.fordham.edu

Modern History Sourcebook:

Documents of German Unification, 1848-1871

- Johann Gustav Droysen: [Speech to the Frankfurt Assembly](#), 1848
- Friedrich Wilhelm IV, King of Prussia: [Proclamation of 1849](#)
- Otto von Bismarck: [Letter to Minister von Manteuffel](#), 1856
- Field Marshal Helmuth von Moltke: [1866](#)
- Otto von Bismarck: [1866](#)
- [The Imperial Proclamation](#), January 18, 1871

Johann Gustav Droysen: *Speech to the Frankfurt Assembly*, 1848

We cannot conceal the fact that the whole German question is a simple alternative between Prussia and Austria. In these states German life has its positive and negative poles--in the former, all the interests which are national and reformatory, in the latter, all that are dynastic and destructive. The German question is not a constitutional question, but a question of power; and the Prussian monarchy is now wholly German, while that of Austria cannot be. . . .We need a powerful ruling house. Austria's power meant lack of power for us, whereas Prussia desired German unity in order to supply the deficiencies of her own power. Already Prussia is Germany in embryo. She will "merge" with Germany. . .

Friedrich Wilhelm IV, King of Prussia: *Proclamation of 1849*

I am not able to return a favorable reply to the offer of a crown on the part of the German National Assembly [meeting in Frankfurt], because the Assembly has not the right, without the consent of the German governments, to bestow the crown which they tendered me, and moreover because they offered the crown upon condition that I would accept a constitution which could not be reconciled with the rights of the German states.

Otto von Bismarck: *Letter to Minister von Manteuffel*, 1856

Because of the policy of Vienna [the Congress of Vienna, 1815], Germany is clearly too small for us both [Prussia and Austria]; as long as an honorable arrangement concerning the influence of each in Germany cannot be concluded and carried out, we will both plough the same disputed acre, and Austria will remain the only state to whom we can permanently lose or from whom we can permanently gain. . . .I wish only to express my conviction that, in the not too distant future, we shall have to fight for our existence against Austria and that it is not within our power to avoid that, since the course of events in Germany has no other solution.

Field Marshal Helmuth von Moltke: *1866*

The war of 1866 [between Prussia and Austria] was entered on not because the existence of Prussia was threatened, nor was it caused by public opinion and the voice of the people; it was a struggle, long foreseen and calmly prepared for, recognized as a necessity by the Cabinet, not for territorial aggrandizement, for an extension of our domain, or for material advantage, but for an ideal end--the establishment of power. Not a foot of land was exacted from Austria, but she had to renounce all part in the hegemony of Germany. . . Austria had exhausted her strength in conquests south of the Alps, and left the western German provinces unprotected, instead of following the road pointed out by the Danube. Its center of gravity lay out of Germany; Prussia's lay within it. Prussia felt itself called upon and strong enough to assume the leadership of the German races.

Otto von Bismarck: 1866

We had to avoid wounding Austria too severely; we had to avoid leaving behind in her any unnecessary bitterness of feeling or desire for revenge; we ought rather to reserve the possibility of becoming friends again with our adversary of the moment, and in any case to regard the Austrian state as a piece on the European chessboard. If Austria were severely injured, she would become the ally of France and of every other opponent of ours; she would even sacrifice her anti-Russian interests for the sake of revenge on Prussia. . . .The acquisition of provinces like Austria Silesia and portions of Bohemia could not strengthen the Prussian state; it would not lead to an amalgamation of German Austria with Prussia, and Vienna could not be governed from Berlin as a mere dependency. . . .Austria's conflict and rivalry with us was no more culpable than ours with her; our task was the establishment or foundation of German national unity under the leadership of the King of Prussia.

The Imperial Proclamation, January 18, 1871

Whereas the German princes and the free cities have unanimously called upon us to renew and to assume, with the restoration of the German Empire, the German imperial office, which has been empty for more than sixty years; and Whereas adequate arrangements have been provided for this in the constitution of the German Confederation;

We, Wilhelm, by the grace of God King of Prussia, do herewith declare that we have considered it a duty to our common fatherland to answer the summons of the united German princes and cities and to accept the German imperial title. In consequence, we and our successors on the throne of Prussia will henceforth bear the imperial title in all our relations and in all the business of the German Empire, and we hope to God that the German nation will be granted the ability to fashion a propitious future for the fatherland under the symbol of its ancient glory. We assume the imperial title, conscious of the duty of protecting, with German loyalty, the rights of the Empire and of its members, of keeping the peace, and of protecting the independence of Germany, which depends in its turn upon the united strength of the people. We assume the title in the hope that the German people will be granted the ability to enjoy the reward of its ardent and self-sacrificing wars in lasting peace, within boundaries which afford the fatherland a security against renewed French aggression which has been lost for centuries. And may God grant that We and our successors on the imperial throne may at all times increase the wealth of the German Empire, not by military conquests, but by the blessings and the gifts of peace, in the realm of national prosperity, liberty, and morality. Wilhelm I, Kaiser und König.

Source:

From: James Harvey Robinson, ed., *Readings in European History*, 2 Vols., (Boston: Ginn and Co., 1904-1905), II:571-575; Otto von Bismarck, *The Man and Statesman*, (New York, 1899), II:48-51

Scanned by: J. S. Arkenberg, Dept. of History, Cal. State Fullerton. Prof. Arkenberg has modernized the text.

This text is part of the Internet Modern History Sourcebook. The Sourcebook is a collection of public domain and copy-permitted texts for introductory level classes in modern European and World history.

Unless otherwise indicated the specific electronic form of the document is copyright. Permission is granted for electronic copying, distribution in print form for educational purposes and personal use. If you do reduplicate the document, indicate the source. No permission is granted for commercial use of the Sourcebook.

© Paul Halsall, July 1998
halsall@murray.fordham.edu