Source: <http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=1863>

Bismarck’s Speech on the Prussian Indemnity Bill (September 1, 1866); Text of the Prussian Indemnity Law (September 14, 1866)

Summary: Since his appointment as Prussia’s Minister President in 1862, Bismarck had been at loggerheads with liberals in the Prussian state parliament (Landtag) over the military budget and the reform of the Prussian army. Because the liberals did not succeed with their political demands, they refused to accept the state budget. Bismarck’s response was to invoke the “gap theory,” which postulated that the lack of an approved budget could not prevent state affairs from continuing, taxes from being collected, and state funds from being disbursed as usual. Even before Prussia’s victory over Austria at the Battle of Königgrätz on July 3, 1866, Prussian liberals had begun looking for ways to work with Bismarck, and the setback they experienced in Prussian elections on the very day of the battle only accelerated their willingness to consider compromise. In August 1866, Bismarck introduced the Indemnity Bill to the Prussian Landtag. It retroactively legalized the state budgets from 1862 to 1866. On September 3, 1866, the Landtag accepted the bill. The first text reproduced below is an excerpt from a speech Bismarck delivered two days before the bill was passed. In it, he extends a double peace-offering: conciliatory words to his former opponents in parliament and the prospect of a peace with Austria that would consolidate Prussia’s hegemony in northern Germany. The second text is a copy of the law itself. (Fink)

Source of English translation: Louis L. Snyder, ed., Documents of German History. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1958, p. 210.

Source of original German text: “Gesetz betreffend die Ertheilung der Indemnität in Bezug auf die Führung des Staatshaushalts vom Jahre 1862 ab und die Ermächtigung zu den Staatsausgaben für das Jahr 1866, 14. September 1866,” [“Law Regarding the Apportionment of the Indemnity with Regard to the Management of the National Budget as of the Year 1862 and the Authorization of Government Spending for the Year 1866, September 14, 1866”] in Preußische Gesetzsammlung [Collection of Prussian Laws] 1866, p. 563; reprinted in Ernst Rudolf Huber, ed., Dokumente zur Deutschen Verfassungsgeschichte [Documents on German Constitutional History], 3rd rev. ed., vol. 2, 1851-1900. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1986, pp. 102-03.

Otto Von Bismarck:

-In the 1860s he engineered a series of wars that unified the German states (excluding Austria) into a powerful German Empire under Prussian leadership.

-His diplomacy of realpolitik and powerful rule at home gained him the nickname the "Iron Chancellor."

-He created the first welfare state in the modern world, with the goal of gaining working class support that might otherwise go to his Socialist enemies.

-Hero to German nationalists

Why did the author write it?

In response to the Landtag dismissing expansion of Prussian military budget and reform, Bismarck drafted a new bill. This bill retroactively legalized state budgets from 1862 to 1866. Two days before this bill was passed, Bismarck gave this speech. The speech contains a double peace offering: One with Austria to consummate Prussia’s dominance in Northern Germany and another with former enemies in the Landtag.

Who was the Author’s audience?

This was a political speech. He gave it to a crowd of politicians where it was received well by the Progressive Party. (http://home.wlu.edu/~patchw/His\_213/reader\_.htm#Three)

What was the Author’s goal?

Bismarck wrote this in order to sway the opinion of bureaucrats (mainly his liberal opponents) to pass his bill. This was a persuasive speech.

**Source Exploration**

General Web Search

1.<http://home.wlu.edu/~patchw/His_213/reader_.htm#Three>

I searched google with the phrase “Bismarck Indemnity Bill”. This source showed up and contains information about many pieces of Bismarck’s political disclosure. It is a website for a graduate school course taking place in Fall 2014. The original source was cited from a political encyclopedia of German Political speeches from 1850-1870 published in 1977. Number 3 lists information about his Indemnity bill. One thing mentioned in this article that I took away from it is the idea that his audience enjoyed what he was saying. There are annotations of applause, laughter and bravado listed throughout. This article was written by William L. Patch, Kenan Professor of History at Washington & Lee University. He received his B.A. in History from the University of California at Berkeley in 1975 and his Ph.D. in modern European history from Yale in 1981. Throughout his higher education he also spent years abroad researching at the University of Göttingen and the University of Bochum. This web source is used as class material for his graduate school class, History 213 at Washington & Lee University. (Biographical information found at http://home.wlu.edu/~patchw/)

2. <http://www.britannica.com/place/Germany/History#ref297538>

Searching the same phrase, “Bismarck Indemnity Bill” into the duckduckgo browser brought up completely different results. I found an encyclopedia Britannica entry focused on Germany as a whole that mentions Bismarck and his bill on Indemnity. This encyclopedia entry gave me insight toward what the effect of the indemnity bill was. After the bill was proposed Bismarck essentially split his liberal opponents into two groups. One group argued there could be no compromise on the formation of a constitutional government, whilst the other more moderate group decided to accept Bismarck’s terms and move forward from there. This encyclopedia was last updated in October of 2015. I am reluctant to use this source due to the availability of editing similar to Wikipedia.

World Cat

3. Ullrich, Volker. Bismarck: the iron chancellor. London: Haus, 2008.

Typing in “The Iron Chancellor” to Melvyl/World Cat brings up a compendium of Bismarck’s reign over unified Germany. I searched this term because I knew there was a biography by Bismarck out there of this name. It is a recent source which is a good secondary source because it has compiled recent information about Bismarck. The author, Ulrich, is a German historian who was awarded the Alfred Kerr Prize for literary criticism and in 2008 received an honorary doctorate from the University of Jena. This information is listed on the Wikipedia page of his name found by a simple google search ( <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Volker_Ullrich> ). This is a significant find because the book is owned by the University of California system and is currently kept at UC Davis and UC San Diego. I have also ordered the book be sent to the UC Santa Barbara library, it arrived on November 19th. I checked it out for the day from the library on Thursday November 20th. Inside the source Ulrich interprets Bismarck’s Indemnity speech. He calls it a win for conservatives in the Reichstag due to its ability to split the left on the contents of the bill. He continues to say this was the beginning of Bismarck’s ability to break down the liberals.

Google Books

4. Hamerow, Theodore S., eds. Otto Von Bismarck And Imperial Germany: A Historical Assessment. Lexington, Mass. : D.C. Heath, ©1994 2nd ed. Print.

A Google Books search of the phrase, “Otto Von Bismarck Indemnity Bill” brought me to this source among others. This source is particularly interesting because it links the speech and the meaning of the actual law together. This source only gives a small amount of information from the actual text on Google Books, but does highlight the phrase “Indemnity Billy” 3 times from the available pages. In an attempt to find more pages from the source, I also did a search on World Cat of “Theodore Hamerow”. The search resulted in no further results of the original source. Theodore Hamerow is a famous American historian who focused on 19th and 20th century German history. His interest on Germany during this time period probably stems from his birth to a Jewish family in Warsaw in 1920. He grew up witnessing the Holocaust and World War II during his college study. (information from <https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/september-2013/in-memoriam-theodore-hamerow> and <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theodore_S._Hamerow> )

5. Bismarck, Otto. Bismarck, the Man & the Statesman. Vol. 2. 1898. Reprint. London: Forgotten Books, 2013. Print.

This source was written by Bismarck himself in an autobiographical style. He wrote it in attempts to preserve his legacy from a point of view that would be written by himself and unbiased by other historians. The original publication is written in German, but this specific version was translated in 2013 into British English by the Forgotten Books Company. This book has been translated multiple times into multiple other languages such as Spanish, Portuguese, and French. This publication comes in two different volumes, Volume 1 for his earlier life and accomplishments while Volume 2 follows chronologically later into his life. The entirety of this book is available online which allowed me to find information much easier. Volume 2 contains information regarding Indemnity from pages 57 to 61. He reasons the purpose of putting an indemnity bill up for passing was to complete a Franco-German war in order for the construction of a United Germany to be realized.

Google Ngram

6. <https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=Indemnity+Bill%2CIndemnity&year_start=1800&year_end=2000&corpus=15&smoothing=3&share=&direct_url=t1%3B%2CIndemnity%20Bill%3B%2Cc0%3B.t1%3B%2CIndemnity%3B%2Cc0>

Refining my Ngram from earlier versions of the proposal, I focused my search more on the topic related to my source. This Ngram search in the German language proves two spikes of the Phrase indemnity bill. Once in the 1860’s while the bill was being discussed and put up for veto, and second during the 1880’s when most sources on this topic were being written about.

