CHAPTER IV

France Triumphant (1790-1814)

During this period Europe was so dominated by the events which occurred in France that it is difficult to describe it from any point of view other than the French. However, it was a vitally important period for Germany too. The revolution and the career of Napoleon I served as a catalyst to speed up momentous changes in the German world. Germany entered the era with the old Empire still legally existing, with two major monarchies, Prussia and Austria, and with several hundred smaller principalities, duchies, counties, ecclesiastical territories, free cities, and imperial knights. She emerged from the period with the thousand-year-old Empire no longer in existence, with the two big monarchies enlarged and strengthened, and with less than forty smaller kingdoms, duchies, and principalities, and only four free cities. The ecclesiastical principalities had disappeared, and the imperial knights and many lesser princes had been “mediatized” (placed under the jurisdiction of one of the temporal rulers).

The changes were not only geographical and structural. A new spirit was abroad. The constant warfare of the revolutionary era introduced in Germany new ideas which were to be dominant in the nineteenth century. The most important were liberalism and nationalism. These are difficult words to define. The first was the legacy of the political thinking of the Enlightenment and the attempt to apply it in France, summarized roughly by the slogan “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity.” The second was largely the result of the occupation of most of Europe by French troops, a situation which gave rise to a strong feeling by the occupied of their separateness, their intrinsic value as a people, their unique importance. The cosmopolitan eighteenth century made way for the nationalistic nineteenth. Another by-product of the period occurred in the military sphere. With the appeal for a levée en masse by the French revolutionary government to repel its enemies, the day of the professional army was
over. Henceforward the conscript army took its place, and war became a
national activity in which whole populations were concerned.

The reaction to the first revolutionary events in France differed from
place to place in Germany. As might be expected, the most favorable
reaction occurred in the west near the French frontier. Here the influence
of France had been strong for centuries; in fact, some of the ecclesiastical
and small temporal territories were more in the orbit of France than of
the Empire. It was in these areas too that the influence of the Enlighten-
ment had been strongest, and there were a number of authors and
publicists who welcomed the happy news of the ending of the old
absolutist regime in France with its feudal overtones. There were proces-
sions and festivities at which "trees of liberty" were planted to indicate
solidarity with the new French dispensation. However, many of these
early attitudes changed. There were legal problems, caused by the feudal
overlapping of German and French territories around Alsace. Then too,
the increasingly radical tone of events in France led to disenchantment
among the more idealistic. The influence of the refugee noblemen and
churchmen, who appeared in ever-increasing numbers in the Rhineland
and made their headquarters at Koblenz, was felt. These people arrived
bitterly complaining of their fate and no doubt exaggerating the atrocious
treatment they had received in their homeland.

Further east there was less sympathy. The autocratic rulers in Berlin
and Vienna could not watch with satisfaction attacks on the principle of
royalty, no matter how pleasant might be the discomfiture of arrogant
France. This was particularly true in Vienna, where both Joseph II and
his successor Leopold II (1790–92) were brothers of Marie Antoinette,
the suffering queen of France. However, during the early months of the
revolution there was too much ill feeling between Prussia and Austria
for the two to act in concert.

Frederick the Great had been succeeded on the throne of Prussia by
his nephew, Frederick William II (1786–97), one of the weakest and
least competent members of the Hohenzollern family. His reign shows
the danger latent in the Prussian system of government. It could work
well when the monarch was willing to give unstinting attention to public
affairs, but when the king was either lazy or incompetent the whole
edifice fell apart. Frederick William II was dissolute and licentious, and
also subject to fits of odd religiosity which culminated in his adoption of
Rosicrucianism. His jealousy of Austria was increased by a war which
Austria was waging with Turkey and which promised territorial gains for
the Hapsburgs. Leopold II, a temperate and moderate ruler, who had
gained a considerable reputation from his administration in Tuscany for
many years, decided to soothe Prussian sensibilities. Thus at Reichen-
bach in 1790 he signed an agreement with Prussia to make no major demands from the Turks, so that Frederick William would have no reason to clamor for compensation. The following year Leopold made a peace with Turkey in which he even relinquished the fortress of Belgrade, which his armies had captured. He was now free to turn his attention to domestic affairs and to try to undo some of the irritating reforms of his brother Joseph. He did this in a spirit of toleration, granting to some of the angry minority national groups the prestige and position they demanded. However, he had to restore order in Belgium by force. Leopold was also distressed with the plight of his sister and brother-in-law in Paris and engaged in a secret correspondence with them which led to their abortive attempt to escape from France in June 1791.

These events served to bring Prussia and Austria closer together. The two German monarchs met at Pillnitz in August to compose their differences. This they did in a joint declaration which mainly served to infuriate the revolutionary government in France. Leopold and Frederick William promised that they would intervene in France, if at all, only with the consent of the other powers. The mere mention of intervention was enough to set the French leaders on fire.

Leopold died suddenly early in 1792 and was succeeded as emperor by his son, the last Holy Roman emperor (Francis II, Holy Roman emperor, 1792–1806; Francis I, emperor of Austria, 1804–35). Francis was immediately faced, in spite of his inexperience, with the imminent danger of war. Some of the small German states in the Rhineland appealed to the emperor to help them get redress from France for the loss of old feudal dues in Alsace. The emperor was sympathetic to their request and, having fallen under the influence of the French émigrés, was not averse to a war. In France a war party, the Girondins, had come to power; they hoped that some of the domestic problems could be solved by a successful war. Thus both sides wanted war. The French Assembly forced the reluctant Louis XVI to declare war on Austria (not on the Empire) on April 20, 1792, and some days later on Prussia too. Thus a period of almost twenty-five years of terrible warfare began.

The German powers believed that the war would be merely a military parade. They felt that France was in the throes of chaos and that her army had been hopelessly crippled by the loss of many of its aristocratic officers. At first they seemed to be right, for they won a number of small victories. This impelled the Prussian commander, the duke of Brunswick, to issue in July a manifesto declaring that the allies planned to restore Louis XVI to his full power and would hold the people of Paris strictly accountable for any indignities suffered by the royal family. This manifesto had an effect opposite to that intended. On August 10, 1792, the
Paris mob stormed the palace of the Tuileries, the king fled for protection to the Assembly, the French monarchy ended, and several weeks later a republic was proclaimed. The turn of the military tide came in September when at Valmy the Prussian army was defeated by the French. It was not a great battle but became a landmark because it put heart into the despairing French and started the astonishing succession of victories which France was to enjoy for the next twenty years.

Frederick William II's heart was never really in the war with France. He was more interested in events in the east where Prussia seemed surer to gain a greater increase of territory than in the confused west. Conditions in Poland had once more reached a crisis. After the partition of 1772 the Poles, with a remarkable spurt of energy, attempted to reform their antiquated kingdom. This effort culminated in 1791 with the adoption of a new constitution establishing a hereditary monarchy for the Wettin family, strengthening the executive power, and abolishing the old feudal vestiges. Empress Catherine of Russia, quick to see the danger of a strong Poland at her border, denounced the new constitution strengthening the monarchy as "revolutionary" in almost the same breath that she denounced the weakening of the monarchy in France as "revolutionary." She sent Russian troops into Poland to restore the old anarchy; they were met by Prussian troops advancing from the west. The result, in early 1793, was a second partition of Poland in which Prussia acquired Danzig and Thorn, a considerable part of western Poland, and a total of over a million new subjects.

The last act of this sorry story occurred in the two following years. Polish patriots rose against the intolerable aggression from abroad but were no match for the combined force of Russia and Prussia. In 1795 Poland disappeared from the map of Europe. This time Austria joined in the pillage. She received the area around Cracow, while Prussia got large parts of central Poland including the important city of Warsaw. Frederick William II felt that he had reason to be proud of his achievements and that he need not lament too much his failures in the west.

Meanwhile the extraordinary and unexpected successes of French arms continued along the Rhine and in Belgium. The old dream of the French border on the Rhine seemed closer to realization than ever before. The warfare was not completely one-sided but enough so to frighten the German powers. The French captured Brussels; they occupied almost the whole left bank of the Rhine forcing the three ecclesiastical electors to flee across the river; in spots they even advanced beyond the Rhine. The enthusiasm of the republican patriots seemed to have no bounds and evoked a corresponding enthusiasm among some of the elements of the German populations. For example, some patriots proclaimed a republic
in Mainz until the city was integrated into France proper. In mid-1793 the allies achieved some successes; but after the French Committee of Public Safety called a mass levy of the French population and reorganized the new army under Carnot, the French seemed invincible. By the end of 1794 all of Belgium was in French hands and the German allies had retired across the Rhine.

Faced by this situation, Frederick William II decided to cut his losses. He determined to trade the west for the east, a policy in line with Prussian tradition. He negotiated the Treaty of Basel (March 1795) with the less radical French republican government which followed the fall of Robespierre in the summer of 1794. This treaty is important because it provided a model for the breakup of the Holy Roman Empire which was to follow during the next decade. It also showed the degree to which Prussia was uninterested in the affairs of the Empire in general and concerned only with the welfare of the Prussian state. This attitude was to be repeated by the Austrians when they came to make their peace two years later.

The Treaty of Basel had both public and secret clauses. In the public clauses Prussia recognized France’s occupation of the left bank of the Rhine temporarily until a final arrangement was secured with the Empire, which had officially come into the war some time before. In secret, France promised that north Germany should be neutralized and, most important, Prussia agreed to the permanent possession of the left bank by France with the understanding that she would be compensated for her own losses by land on the right bank taken from secularized ecclesiastical territories. This decision signed the death warrant of the old ecclesiastical principalities, which were to disappear almost completely in the next ten years.

The Treaty of Basel and the Third Partition of Poland were the last important acts of Frederick William II, who died in 1797. He was succeeded by his son, Frederick William III (1797–1840), a devoted, hard-working, mediocre man of distinctly limited intelligence, who was destined to a long reign full of stirring events which he hardly understood.

Those who expected the Treaty of Basel to lay the foundations of a general peace were disappointed. Austria was as antirevolutionary as ever and was carrying out an “anti-Jacobin” prosecution at home. Furthermore, the emperor’s brother, Archduke Charles, was having some success in fighting the French who had advanced into south Germany.

The new French government, the Directory, had decided to launch a new series of offensives against the Austrians. This action was to comprise three separate thrusts. The two principal ones were planned for central and southern Germany, while a third was intended mainly to
hold down an Austrian army in northern Italy. This third army was entrusted to a young Corsican officer, General Napoleon Bonaparte, who had achieved some reputation as an artillery officer fighting the British at Toulon. The two armies in Germany had only moderate success; against them Archduke Charles won his victories. The decision was achieved by Bonaparte’s army in Italy.

The Napoleonic campaigns have been described in intense detail and must not concern us here unduly. Napoleon advanced from the Riviera coast, knocked the king of Piedmont-Sardinia out of the war, defeated the Austrians at Lodi, and in May 1796 occupied the old Austrian possession of Milan, where he set up a republic and ruled like a king. During the fall and winter he defeated the Austrians several times, most notably at Arcola and Rivoli, and in the spring of 1797 crossed the Alps and presented himself dangerously close to the Austrian homeland. The result was preliminary peace negotiations at Leoben and a final treaty signed in October 1797 at Campo Formio.

The Treaty of Campo Formio repeats the pattern of the terms of Basel. Austria ceded Belgium outright to France. She also recognized Napoleon’s reorganization of northern Italy into a republic. In return she received, through an act of piracy, the possessions of the stately old republic of Venice. Austria also agreed to summon a congress at Rastadt to settle the whole tangled problem of the western part of the Empire. In secret she gave her permission to France to possess the left bank of the Rhine as far as Cologne; she stipulated that Prussia was to receive no compensation on the right bank, but that other princes would be compensated, presumably from ecclesiastical lands. Finally France offered to secure for Austria Salzburg and parts of Bavaria. The same selfish spirit animated the Hapsburg in this treaty that had animated the Hohenzollern at Basel. With this document the war of the First Coalition against France came to an end. Only Great Britain was still at war.

The Congress of Rastadt was a lamentable failure. It sat from late 1797 to the spring of 1799 and then adjourned because a new general war broke out. All the hatreds, tensions, and petty meannesses of the German princelings showed themselves nakedly. The scene was a source of scorn and derision to the publicists of the time. Bonaparte spent some days at Rastadt on his return home from Campo Formio. In his conversations he laid down the lines of his future German policy: encouragement of Austro-Prussian enmity, favoritism to the middle-sized German states (e.g., Bavaria, Saxony, Württemberg, Baden, and Hesse-Kassel), absolute French domination of Rhenish Germany. It was the old policy of Richelieu and Louis XIV, except that now the military weight was completely on the French side. The intricacies of the organization of the
tottering old Empire were too much for the Germans to handle themselves. However, another war was to intervene before the surgery was performed. Soon after his visit to Rastadt Bonaparte left on his adventuresome if fruitless expedition to Egypt.

The Second Coalition was largely the work of Emperor Paul of Russia, a near-psychotic, who resented the behavior of the French toward the Knights of Malta, of whom he was grand master. He also deplored French meddling in central Europe, so he allied himself with Britain, Austria, and various smaller nations. Russian, British, and Austrian armies attacked France from several directions during 1799. At first the allied armies swept all before them and dislodged the French from positions in Italy, Switzerland, and Germany. The only French success was the repulse of a British landing in Holland. However, in late 1799 Paul changed his mind. He became jealous of Britain and also angry at the lukewarm co-operation given his armies by the inefficient Austrians; therefore he withdrew from the war leaving Austria as the only major continental power involved. At the same time Bonaparte left his army in Egypt and returned with a few followers to France. In a coup d'état he overthrew the government of the Directory and made himself dictator of France with the title of First Consul.

True to his policy of rapid military movement Napoleon, in the spring of 1800, led his army over the Great St. Bernard Pass into Italy and defeated the Austrians at the battle of Marengo. Some months later the French general Moreau defeated Archduke John at the battle of Hohenlinden in Germany and advanced toward the Tyrol. Emperor Francis asked for peace, and the new treaty was signed at Lunéville in February 1801. This treaty repeated many of the provisions of the Treaty of Campo Formio, including the French possession of the left bank of the Rhine and the indemnification of the German princes who lost land there.

This time there was to be no repetition of the inconclusive Congress of Rastadt. The indemnifications and the territorial shifts in the Empire were worked out over a period of two years under the watchful eyes of the French government and also of the new Russian emperor, Alexander I. France insisted on her rights granted by the Treaty of Westphalia to guard the institutions of the Empire, as did Russia on similar rights from the Treaty of Teschen of 1779. In fact, most of the negotiations occurred in Paris where Talleyrand, Napoleon's foreign minister, interviewed the various claimants and made awards while increasing his large personal fortune from German bribes. The German princes reached new depths of ignominy as they begged for scraps of old German territory from the Corsican upstart who was ruling France and the apostate bishop who was his minister.
By late 1802 the arrangements were completed and the matter was placed in the hands of the Diet of the Empire at Regensburg. The Diet appointed an Imperial Deputation and the final act of this committee, passed in February 1803, bears the massive title of Reichsdeputations-hauptschluss. By this enactment the old medieval Empire came for all intents and purposes to an end. Its composition was radically altered. France bordered the Rhine for its full length from Alsace north. There were now six free cities instead of forty-eight. There were only three ecclesiastical principalities left, and they were soon to go. All the rest of the ecclesiastical lands and municipal territories were used as indemnification for the princes who lost land west of the Rhine, but in most cases the compensations were considerably greater than the losses. Two ecclesiastical electorates (Cologne and Trier) were abolished, and three lay ones (Baden, Württemberg, and Hesse-Kassel) were added. There was no mention of the imperial knights who simply disappeared as political entities by the process of mediatization (placing them under a temporal lord).

The indemnifications benefited principally Prussia and the middle states, which received very generous grants of former church territories. Bavaria, Baden, Württemberg, Hanover, and the Hesses became considerable states but not large enough to be a threat. Napoleon was going to find them very convenient for his purposes. In fact, he soon simply occupied Hanover because it belonged to the king of England. Germany was much simplified; this is Napoleon’s principal claim to German gratitude. However, at the time it was done only for the greater power of France. The formal abolition of the Empire and the organization of much of Germany into a confederation under French auspices did not come for three more years and required another war. But the foundations were all laid in 1803.

In 1804 Napoleon affronted old Europe by two actions. In February he violated the sovereignty of Baden by sending a force across the border and arresting a Bourbon prince, the duke of Enghien, whom he brought to Paris and executed, alleging a conspiracy against the French government. Three months later he was proclaimed Napoleon I, emperor of the French. These events were viewed with extreme alarm, especially by Alexander of Russia, who was now becoming very anti-French. He was encouraged in his attitude by the British, who, after a short peace, were again at war with France. The result was an alliance between the two and efforts to include Austria and Prussia in the coalition. Austria reacted to Napoleon’s proclamation with the proclamation by Emperor Francis of his new title, emperor of Austria. This action, of course, emphasized even further the impending dissolution of the old Empire. After a good
deal of delay the Austrians joined the Third Coalition with Britain and
Russia in 1805, but by the end of that year Prussia still refused to com-
mit herself.

In the fall of 1805 Napoleon broke camp at Boulogne, from which he
had threatened Britain with invasion, and marched rapidly across France
and Germany arriving at the city of Ulm, where he found an Austrian
army which he surrounded. General Mack, the Austrian commander, had
no choice except to surrender all his men. Napoleon then advanced to-
ward Moravia where the Austrians and Russians had joined forces.
There on December 2 he won probably his greatest victory, the battle of
Austerlitz. Austria had to ask for peace while the Russians retreated
far to the east to lick their wounds.

The Treaty of Pressburg of 1805 subjected Austria to still further
humiliations. She gave up all her Italian holdings to France or to Napo-
leon's new kingdom of Italy; she ceded the Tyrol and a great part of her
German territory to Bavaria, which was allied to France; and to Württem-
berg and Baden she gave the remainder of the Hapsburg possessions in
the west. Austria had to recognize Bavaria and Württemberg as kingdoms
and for all these losses received only Salzburg and a small territory in
its neighborhood. She hardly existed as a German state anymore.

Napoleon carried out his final organization of Germany in the early
months of 1806. He made a number of changes and transfers of territory
and government and in July announced the formation of the Confedera-
tion of the Rhine. This was at first an organization of sixteen states but
later included almost all the German states except Prussia and Austria.
These states withdrew from the Holy Roman Empire, became allied with
France, and placed themselves under the protection of the French Em-
pire. Louis XIV's dream was at length realized. Western Germany be-
came an area tributary to France.

There was only one reaction which Emperor Francis, now deprived of
force, could make to the new situation. In August he simply announced
that the Holy Roman Empire no longer existed. The old institution which
had lasted just over a thousand years in its various forms was crushed by
the revolutionary fervor of the French and the ruthless statesmanship of
Napoleon.

There still remained the humiliation of Prussia to make Napoleon's
authority in Germany complete. Prussia ever since the Treaty of Basel
had played a cowardly and selfish role in German politics. She had main-
tained her neutrality but at the cost of her reputation for bravery. In
1805 Emperor Alexander had done all he could to bring Prussia into
the coalition even to the extent of going to Berlin to make a personal plea.
However, the Prussians hesitated until after the defeat of Austria and the
retreat of the Russians. In mid-1806, at the worst possible moment, they declared war on France because of some actions of Napoleon in north Germany and some negotiations concerning Hanover. They thought that their army was still the army of Frederick the Great. It no longer was, however, and in two battles fought on the same day (Jena and Auerstädt on October 14, 1806) the Prussians were disastrously defeated. Within a few days Napoleon was in Berlin and most of the Prussian fortresses had surrendered to the French. The king and the court fled to East Prussia where Napoleon pursued them in early 1807. The Russians joined forces with the Prussians, and Napoleon fought both in an inconclusive battle at Eylau in February. In June the decisive French victory of Friedland brought Napoleon to the frontier of the Russian Empire.

Napoleon met with Alexander and Frederick William at Tilsit immediately after the battle of Friedland. He concluded a treaty of friendship and alliance with Russia but a very humiliating treaty with Prussia. It might have been worse had it not been for the mediation of Alexander and the tearful pleas of the beautiful Prussian queen, Louise. Prussia ceded to Napoleon all her territories west of the Elbe River, most of which were erected into the kingdom of Westphalia for Jerome Bonaparte. She also ceded most of the land acquired in the partitions of Poland, from which Napoleon created the grand duchy of Warsaw under his friend the king of Saxony. Prussia was further forbidden to maintain an army of over forty-two thousand men and was required to pay France a large indemnity. Having been forced to greatness by Frederick the Great and then swollen by the booty from Poland, Prussia could now hardly rank as a second-class power. This was probably the zenith of Napoleon’s fortunes and the nadir of German humiliation.

At this point interest shifts from the parade of Napoleon’s victories to the efforts made by his victims to reform their states and effectively resist the conqueror. The long-term consequences of the French invasions were beginning to be felt. In the western states of the Confederation of the Rhine the new spirit of French liberalism and efficient administration were introduced, and these old-fashioned states began to join the modern world. For example, in Bavaria during the Francophile ministry of Count Montgelas serfdom was abolished, while in the kingdom of Westphalia the Napoleonic law codes were instituted.

More important was the new spirit of nationalism displayed by the occupied countries. This too was learned from France. Modern nationalism seems to have begun with the French Revolution manifesting itself in the cult of patriotism, the mass army, and the song of the revolution “Marseillaise.” Sentiments like this are contagious, and when
French armies occupied their territories other Europeans began to develop a cult of patriotism directed against the French oppressors.

After her disastrous defeat in 1805 Austria tried to reform herself and become the German leader, a position she had abdicated some time before. In the long run, the dynastic selfishness of the Hapsburgs and the particularism of the non-Germanic nationality groups defeated the Austrian reform. However, in 1808 and 1809 Count Stadion, the emperor's chief minister, made impressive strides in centralizing the government and reforming the finances. At the same time Archduke Charles accomplished a good deal in the reform of the army while attempting to make it a match for the French. The Austrians were impressed by the brave stand the Spanish were making against their French oppressors; the British government encouraged Austria with subsidies; even the astute Austrian ambassador in Paris, Count Clemens von Metternich, thought the time was ripe for war. Therefore, in the spring of 1809 the Austrian government issued a call for all Germans to join it in an attempt to throw off the French yoke.

The Austrian appeal found little answer. In the north there were a few quixotic uprisings which the French put down without trouble. The only important one was that of Andreas Hofer and his brave Tyrolean peasants who stood courageously, if hopelessly, against the Bavarians and the French. Austria had to fight alone. Napoleon hurriedly left Spain and marched across southern Germany. He suffered his first defeat from Archduke Charles at Aspern in May, but in July he crushed the Austrian army at Wagram near Vienna.

The Treaty of Schönbrunn (October 1809) brought Austria almost to the depths that Prussia had reached at Tilsit. She had to cede the Salzburg area to Bavaria, Polish territories to the grand duchy of Warsaw and to Russia, and her whole Adriatic coast to Napoleon, who needed it to seal off the coast of Europe from British commerce. She also had to break off all connection with Great Britain and to pay France an indemnity. This treaty broke Austria's spirit; for several years she offered no resistance to the French. In fact in April 1810 Napoleon married Archduchess Maria Louisa, a daughter of Emperor Francis. This created a blood bond between the old Hapsburg and the upstart Bonaparte. With the birth of Napoleon's son in 1811 the Austrians had an interest in the maintenance of the new empire. From this time on their diplomacy was not intended to rid Europe of Napoleon but merely to restrict the French to predominantly French areas. This was the line followed by Metternich, who had now become Austria's principal minister, a position which he was to hold for almost forty years.

The Prussian effort at reform and the reshaping of her institutions
was more successful than the Austrian and far more significant for the
future of Germany. In fact German historians call the years from Tilsit
to 1813 simply the "reform" period. The reforms were enacted in a
number of fields: political and economic, military, and educational.
Prussia rose out of the slump into which she had fallen and prepared her-
self for the principal role in Germany. She enjoyed the leadership of a
number of remarkable men, many of whom were not Prussian by birth
but drifted there to serve the independent German state which seemed to
offer the most hope for the future. They found themselves opposed and
blocked at almost every turn by the shortsighted and pedantic Frederick
William III.

The outstanding member of this circle was Karl, Freiherr vom Stein.
Stein was an immediate subject of the emperor, an imperial knight, whose
little domain lay not far from the Rhine. He found the management of
his estates frustratingly petty, so early in life he entered the Prussian
civil service. He rose gradually through the ranks and by 1804 was in
charge of the finances of Prussia.

Stein was distinctly a son of the Enlightenment. He believed in the
primacy of reason and also in human liberty, being convinced that free
men are more productive members of society than those in bondage.
He was no lover of tradition for its own sake and invited constant trouble
with the king and the conservatives by his insistence on the thorough
overhauling of the habit-ridden Prussian administration. Thus in early
1807 the king dismissed him in an order describing him in abusive
language. During the disastrous months that followed the king was forced
to change his attitude and the day after the signature of Tilsit appointed
Stein his principal minister, a position which he held for about a year.
During this year he achieved several important reforms and proved to be
unusual for his period since he was a German, rather than only a Prus-
sian, patriot.

Two important enactments marked Stein's tenure of office. The first
was the edict in October 1807 which liberated the serfs. Legally the serfs
were now free and for the first time had the right to sell and buy prop-
erty. The thought was that the edict was to be succeeded by others
abolishing all manorial jurisdiction, but this complete task was not ac-
complished and the lords of the manors retained many of their rights
until 1848. Nevertheless, Stein took an important first step.

The following year Stein issued the municipal ordinance which granted
self-government to a number of the cities in Prussia and eliminated the
old guild system of government. This was an important beginning of
some sort of liberalism in the autocratic Prussian state. In spite of his
hopes, Stein was not able to obtain the king’s approval to a similar law for rural areas; thus a dichotomy was established between the semi-liberal towns and the very conservative countryside, a situation which was to have influence in Prussian politics for decades to come.

Stein was not fated to remain long in office and was unable to carry out the far-reaching plans he nourished for the future. In late 1808 an anti-Napoleonic letter of his was seized by the French censorship, and Napoleon demanded that Frederick William dismiss his minister—probably the most acceptable demand that the king of Prussia ever had to obey. After two years of return to the old conservative leadership Frederick William appointed Karl von Hardenberg as his principal adviser in 1810. Hardenberg continued Stein’s work during his long tenure of office. He secularized church property, reformed the financial structure of Prussia, and introduced legislation along the lines of the new economic philosophy of *laissez faire*. This earned for him the dislike of the old vested interests, especially the noble landed proprietors, but he managed to retain the confidence of the king and to change the course of Prussian development in a modern direction.

The old army of Frederick the Great and its organization died on the field of Jena. At Tilsit Napoleon demanded that the Prussian army be shorn to a mere forty-two thousand men. The time was obviously ripe for a thoroughgoing reorganization in the military sphere. A brilliant group was at hand to effect it. As military administrators, there were Scharnhorst, Gneisenau, and Boyen; as a philosopher of war, Clausewitz; as generals in the field, Blücher and Yorck. The French had revolutionized warfare by the introduction of the mass citizen army. Now the Prussians copied their foes. They gradually formed a new Prussian army consisting of a regular professional army as the core with a militia and a general levy of the male population as reserves to be called upon when needed. This became the pattern for the Prussian army in the following century of Prussian military prowess. To circumvent the limitation on the size of the army, the new leaders devised an ingenious system in which a small number of men were trained intensively for a short time and then replaced by another group. Thus when Prussia took the field against France in 1813, the enemy was astonished by her large number of well-trained soldiers.

In the realm of education the major achievement was the foundation of the University of Berlin in 1810 under the leadership of Wilhelm von Humboldt. The older universities had been increasingly criticized for the sterility of their teaching and methods. New educational ideas were being developed; Humboldt was a disciple of the new philosophy and
created at Berlin an institution which in a short time became the leader in German teaching and research and one of the principal universities in the world.

The new spirit manifested itself in other ways. Ludwig (Father) Jahn established a nationwide system of physical education for young Prussian boys, in which not only their bodies were strengthened but also their minds indoctrinated with ideas of the national grandeur of the Germans. Possibly most impressive of all was the series of lectures given in the winter of 1807–8 by Johann Gottlieb Fichte entitled *Addresses to the German Nation*. They were delivered under the immediate surveillance of French police, and were concerned first with a consideration of the sterling moral qualities of the German people and then with a call for a rehabilitation of German national greatness. Thus while Prussia seemed to be at her lowest ebb, she was in fact going through a momentous process of reform and renewal which was to bear fruit in the years to come.

The crisis with France developed after the tragic retreat of Napoleon’s armies from Russia in the autumn of 1812. Both Prussia and Austria as technical allies of France had to provide contingents for the massive attack. Thousands of other Germans were in the *Grande Armée* as part of the forces contributed by the various states of the Confederation of the Rhine. The Austrians managed to avoid a good part of the fighting since they were on the right wing, well south of Napoleon himself, but the other Germans suffered along with the French in the awful retreat. By November it developed into a rout, and Napoleon left the remains of his army and hurried ahead to Paris.

At this point Tsar Alexander had to decide whether to continue the war now that the enemy was off Russian soil. His decision was undoubtedly influenced by Stein, who had some time before made his way to the Russian court and become Alexander’s adviser on German affairs. Alexander, always pleased to play Sir Galahad, was receptive to Stein’s counsel and led his army across the Russian frontier to undertake a general war of liberation of Europe from the French yoke.

Another important decision had to be taken, this time by General Yorck, commander of the remnant of the Prussian army near the Russian border. He could continue to fight the Russians, he could surrender to them, or he could co-operate with them. Completely on his own initiative, in an action which technically constituted treason, Yorck signed on December 30 at Tauroggen an agreement with the Russians guaranteeing neutrality. This opened the way for the Russian army into East Prussia, where Alexander appointed Stein temporary administrator of all German territories cleared by the Russian army.
The Confederation of the Rhine and Prussia in 1812

Boundary of the Confederation of the Rhine
These actions placed King Frederick William in a quandary and forced that vacillating monarch into some difficult decisions. He could not forgive Yorck's disobedience, something unthinkable in a Prussian officer, but nevertheless he could not avoid observing the popularity of Yorck's act. He moved to Breslau, away from French observation, and there entered into negotiations with Stein and the Russians. The result on February 28 was the Treaty of Kalisch, a full military alliance containing the promise that Prussia would be granted territories suitable to regain her position of 1806, though not necessarily the same territories she had lost because Alexander did not want Prussia to control so much of Poland.

For the next several weeks Frederick William acted as a popular monarch, which was very much out of character. He established the decoration of the Iron Cross for bravery in the field, he called for the establishment of "Free Corps" to fight the enemy, and in his proclamation "To my people" he listed eloquently the patriotic motives for war. The Prussian people responded with enthusiasm. They founded Free Corps, the most successful of which operated under Major von Lützow, and established a tradition to be exploited in the melancholy days after 1918. They advanced money while the poets and composers wrote songs. Never before had the people of Prussia felt that they were incorporated into the actions of their government.

The enthusiasm was not shared by the rest of the Germans. Austria played a devious diplomatic game for some months trying to find a compromise which would at one time preserve the Bonaparte dynasty, restore Austria as a great power, and keep the French Empire within manageable limits. Of the states of the Confederation of the Rhine only one withdrew from its alliance with Napoleon.

Napoleon, always determined to take the first steps himself, performed a miracle by raising still another French army during the winter of 1812-13. In the spring he appeared in Germany; during May he won two battles and forced the Allies out of Saxony, where the king was his stoutest adherent. In early June the two sides agreed on an armistice in the hope of arriving at some sort of compromise. The whole summer was taken up by discussions, with Metternich acting as mediator. No result was achieved. In August the Austrians realized that peace was not in sight and finally cast their lot with Britain, Russia, and Prussia. For the first time Napoleon was actively opposed by the four other major powers.

Two months later Austria concluded a treaty with Bavaria, which was certainly not decisive militarily but was important because it showed the trend of diplomatic thought concerning the future of Germany. In it
the king of Bavaria, who had received more favors than any other German prince from Napoleon, abandoned his alliance with France and joined the Allies. In return he was promised that at the conclusion of peace he could retain his title of king and also the lands he then possessed, except for those received from former Austrian territories. This meant that there was no serious thought of either reviving the old Holy Roman Empire or restoring the dozens of princes and prelates who had lost their possessions in the preceding fifteen years. Obviously a whole new organization of Germany was envisaged.

The great battle was fought near Leipzig from October 16 to 19, 1813. This was Napoleon's decisive defeat. After it the French moved westward pursued slowly by the Allies. One after another the princes of the Confederation of the Rhine joined the alliance against Napoleon. The kingdom of Westphalia collapsed. Only the king of Saxony stood firm, and for his loyalty he was arrested. More and more territory fell under the administration of Stein.

The Allies were still not agreed concerning the fate of Napoleon and France. For a time they continued to think of the left bank of the Rhine as permanently French; but as the months went on and Napoleon continued to resist in his brilliantly executed campaign in France in early 1814, their opinions changed. They were not yet prepared to make the final decisions for the future of Europe, but by March, led by Tsar Alexander, they had agreed on the deposition of Napoleon and the restoration of the Bourbon family. On March 9 the Allies signed the Treaty of Chaumont, in which they mutually pledged to continue to fight until the final defeat of Napoleon and not to make any separate peace. They also agreed that there should be a great congress to remake the map which had undergone such upsetting changes in the last years. Emperor Francis invited his allies to meet in his capital city of Vienna.

The end of an era came on April 11, 1814, when Napoleon abdicated from the throne of the French Empire and from all his other titles, receiving in exchange sovereignty over the island of Elba, where he proceeded to rule his toy kingdom.