

## Bismarck's Formula for Success

By 1848 liberal democratic revolutionaries had failed to create a unified Germany. The issue of unification, the making one strong German nation, was now led by Otto von Bismarck.

He is best known for his political opinions called **Realpolitik** (Realistic Politics) which is doing whatever is necessary to achieve one's goals, and not what is moral or right and his **Blood and Iron** speech.



He was a hardheaded Prussian who used dishonest diplomacy and brute force to achieve his goals. In 1862, after a career as a diplomat, he was appointed Chief Minister of Prussia. Kaiser Wilhelm I had struggled to pass reforms within the government and approval to strengthen his army. Under his appointment, Bismarck passed more tax laws and strengthened the army despite often violent parliament protests.

After invading Denmark and then Austria in 1866, the Prussian legislature followed Bismarck's nationalistic pride and voted for his campaigns of change and unification.

Bismarck became a very powerful man and the following extract from a Germany author, gives an insight as to his antics, ways, opinions and personality.

***“Bismarck plays his comedy thoroughly, trying to intimidate the Kaiser and all the parties. It amuses him to take everyone in. He is trying to induce the Kaiser to give way about the period of military service. This much is certain, that he has so far made a great impression by the brilliancy of his genius. For the time being he practices the utmost politeness, even when he is solely tired. In the course of a debate he opened his cigar case and showed his opponents a small olive branch saying: I recently picked this at Avignon (in France), intending to offer it to the people's party in token of peace. I see, however, that the time for such action has not yet arrived.”***

***Blood and Iron*** (German: *Blut und Eisen*) is the name given to a speech made by Otto von Bismarck given on 30 September 1862, at the time when he was Minister President of Prussia, about the unification of the German territories. It is also a transposed phrase that Bismarck uttered near the end of the speech that has become one of his most widely known quotations.

It was not recorded at the time but when the press heard about his speech it was printed based on personal accounts. The following is an extract of this speech.

***"The position of Prussia in Germany will not be determined by its liberalism but by its power [...] Prussia must concentrate its strength and hold it for the favorable moment, which has already come and gone several times. Since the treaties of Vienna, our frontiers have been ill-designed for a healthy body politic. Not through speeches and majority decisions will the great questions of the day be decided—that was the great mistake of 1848 and 1849—but by iron and blood (Eisen und Blut)."***

Although Bismarck was an outstanding diplomat, the phrase "blood and iron" has become a popular description of his foreign policy partly because he did on occasion resort to war to further the unification of Germany and the expansion of its continental power. Therefore he became known as "the iron chancellor."



GERMAN CARTOON, 1884.

Cartoon showing Otto von Bismarck (left) trying to kill socialism with kindness by combining reform with the suppression of socialist parties

Sources:

Emil Ludwig, *Bismarck: The Story of a Fighter*, trans. by Eden and Cedar Paul, Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1927, pp. 206-07.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blood\\_and\\_Iron\\_\(speech\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blood_and_Iron_(speech))

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