Italian and German Unification: Crash Course World History #27

Crash Course: European History
https://youtube.com/watch?v=KSjDe9_jZk8
https://nerdfighteria.info/v/KSjDe9_jZk8

===== (00:00) to (02:00) =====

Hi, I'm John Green and this is Crash Course: European History. So, if you look at Europe today, you'll note that two of the European Union's largest economies, Italy and Germany, have not existed as unified kingdoms or sovereign states during our first 26 episodes. We tend to think of Europe's nation states as static and long-standing, but one of my great-grandfathers was born before Italy became a unified country. Now, I know that I am old, but I'm not that old. What's that? Oh, our script supervisor Zulaiha informs me that I am that old.

At any rate, all the stereotypes we have of these national identities that Italians talk with their hands, that Germans have extremely punctual public transport, are quite new because in 1850, most Italians wouldn't have called themselves Italians. They would have been Genoese or Sicilian or Veronese. The post-revolutionary European world became one of dramatic nation building that ultimately set the stage for 20th century nationalistic fervor, but before we can get nationalist passions riled up, we need to make some more nations. (Intro) The first of the disruptive nation builders was Napoleon III, Napoleon Bonaparte's nephew. He set out to create a lavish court, boost the economy, create banks, build railroads, and otherwise modernise France. Politically, he set up a rubber stamp legislature, meaning that mostly, they just existed to agree with him, and he also outlawed worker activism. Napoleon III's modus operandi was war, as it would be for many of the nation builders of the mid 19th century, and he helped provoke the Crimean War, a short miserable and especially deadly one. In it, France, Britain, and the Ottoman Empire fought Russia, which had been challenging Britain across Asia, and the special genius of Napoleon III was to get Austria not to come to the aid of Russia and instead to remain neutral.

===== (02:00) to (04:00) =====

This cracked the Holy Alliance of Russia, Prussia, and Austria that had been set up to stabilize Europe and Russia's defeat in the war ensured that it would not help squash revolution as it had in 1848. Instead, Russia reeled from its military and other shortcomings. By the 1860s, the Tsar recognized the need to free the serfs, reform the military, and set up modern judicial procedures in order to save its autocratic system, or at least to save it for another 50 years. Let's go to the Thought Bubble. Napoleon III used the peace after the Crimean War to remake Paris into a modern world capital and to the South, Camillo di Cavour aimed to create a unified Italian state. Like Napoleon, he was an economic modernizer who set up steamship companies, experimented in agriculture, and traveled to see the latest in modernization projects. Cavour became prime minister for the King of Piedmont Sardinia, who allowed him to move forward with these modernization plans. Napoleon III saw advantages in supporting him, so he signed on as an ally in defeating Austria, which controlled Northern Italy. Napoleon's idea was that Piedmont would get Austria's territory in Northern Italy, Napoleon would get the center, and the Pope would rule kind of an Italian confederation. So in accordance with this plan, in 1859, Piedmont provoked Austria into declaring war and quickly gained victories, but Cavour and his army looked so good in victory that Italians rallied behind him and were like, I think we want to be Italian and not French, thus thwarting Napoleon's plans. In 1860, the revolutionary and democratc Giuseppe Garibaldi gathered up 1000 volunteers, mostly teenagers, clad them in red shirts, and headed by ship to Sicily, where revolts against aristocratic landlords were already underway. He planned to capture the South for a unified Italy, and in 1860, he and his forces succeeded in doing so, then they moved Northward to unite with the forces of Piedmont, and in 1861, the Kingdom of Italy was declared. Thanks, Thought Bubble. So a small pause is necessary here.

===== (04:00) to (06:00) =====

Why is Garibaldi a pro-Republic romantic leader working on behalf of a monarch, like the king of Piedmont, and why is (?~4:07), the modernizer and prime minister of a monarchy, joining the likes of Garibaldi? Well, by the 1850s, romantic dreams of national unification and the rule of the people gave way to what is known as realpolitik, or power politics, or realism in politics. Gone were the heartfelt assertions that political actions were the will of God or that they achieved some divine or romantic destiny on behalf of the nation, better, it was argued, to be realistic and get things done. German politician Otto von Bismarck expressed realpolitik best when he said, "Germany looks not to Prussia's liberalism. The great questions of the day will not be settled by speeches and majority decisions, but by blood and iron." Bismarck became one of the most successful practitioners of realpolitik, and in the process, created the modern German empire. As a young adult, Bismarck's life had basically no seriousness of purpose. I had one of those young adulthoods as well. Born to a well-to-do landed aristocrat or (?~5:08), he was a carouser and imbiber and generally a lout as a university student. Boy, this is familiar. He built up so many debts that he gave up a career in the civil service to return home and help run the family farm. Alright, finally our lives are diverging, and I guess they're about to diverge further since he was arguably the most important European politician of the second half of the 19th century and I am, you know. On the other hand, I've never started a war. Bismarck's life got a lot more serious after he met and married Johanna Puttkammer, a devout Lutheran who gave him a more peaceful home life to balance the political turmoil that he came to embrace. His ultimate ambition was to become a major player in German and international politics, but I've known a lot of drunken and heavily indebted partiers and they have all big dreams. What makes Bismarck so astonishing is the extent to which he succeeded. He made his return to the political scene as Prussia's delegate to assemblies of the German states and then as ambassador to Russia and through these roles, the staunchly monarchist Bismarck learned lessons about diplomacy and international affairs and about economic liberals and their constitutional values.

===== (06:00) to (08:00) =====

He came not to oppose a constitution per se, nor to oppose economic progress. What he did above all else was support Prussian king William I, so we shouldn't see Bismarck as opposed to this or that kind of reform so much as strongly in favor of a unified Germany under the leadership of a king. In 1862, William I wanted army reform and modernization, as did some liberals, but William refused to budge on certain other provisions, especially a three year term for recruits, and Bismarck promised not to budge either, and then went ahead with the King's version of reform: bypassing parliament altogether by simply collecting taxes and dispensing them as the king wanted. This, among many other actions, made Bismarck enemies of all kinds, partly because of his bullying manner, but he continued to be supported by the one person who really counted: the Prussian King. So for several decades, but most pressingly in the post 1848 atmosphere, a major question was who would lead the Germans: Austria or Prussia? Serving King William I loyally was Bismarck's key to promoting Prussia as the dominant power for Germans. Sometimes people interpret Bismarck as like an all-seeing visionary who carefully plotted every step he took on behalf of Prussia, but historians have now mostly come to believe that Bismarck's political moves were not part of some pre-planned

game of 4D chess to outmaneuver Austria. Instead, he just had a gift for improvisation. For example, in 1864, he made an alliance with Austria to settle the status of two contested provinces: Schleswig and Holstein. So Bismarck persuaded Austria to join Prussia in war against Denmark to resolve the contested rule of Schleswig/Holstein. Their victory gave Prussia administration of Schleswig and Austria got Holstein.

===== (08:00) to (10:00) =====

Two years later, Prussia and Austria went to war again, this time with each other, over the same two provinces. The Austro-Prussian War lasted just over six weeks, thanks to Prussia's aforementioned commitment to the professionalism and modernization of its army. So this whole affair was masterfully handled by Bismarck. First, get your enemy Austria to help you defeat your other enemy, Denmark. Then, defeat Austria and boom, congratulations, you've got Schleswig-Holstein, which only sounds like a disease. It likely wasn't planned that way, which gets at something important about history. Did the center of the world just open? Is there a Magic-8 ball in there? Alright, Magic-8 ball, is the European Union gonna hold up okay? It is certain! The thing about history is that it always feels certain, because, you know, it already happened. So when we in the present look at Bismarck in the past and the unification of Germany, it all feels like extraordinarily strategic, but I would argue that in the multiverse, there's a bunch of worlds where it doesn't work out the way that it worked out for us. History is what happens to have happened, and we are all making that together, just as Bismarck and everyone else is 19th century Europe was making it. But back to Bismarck. So following this big victory, King William wanted to keep going, to capture Vienna, maybe even Hungary, but Bismarck, with his usually astuteness in international affairs, encouraged the King to pull back and consolidate as Prussia was now the leading German nation. Bismarck had drawn the Northern German kingdoms and states into the North German Confederation while also aiming to draw in the German states that were still resisting joining Prussia, and how he did this was kind of brilliant in a dark-artsy sort of way.

Bismarck deeply understood the growing power of mass-market media like newspapers and he knew how to feed rumors to them. For instance, there was a battle over who would take the throne of tiny Luxembourg, someone allied with Prussia or someone allied with Napoleon III.

===== (10:00) to (12:00) =====

As the contest heated up, Bismarck got a personal quote in the papers to the effect that the French were, "not the fine people they are usually considered to be," and were, in fact, "loudmouthed people given over to bold, violent behavior." Meanwhile, he also doctored a telegram sent from the Prussian king to make it appear insulting to the French and then in August 1870, the French National Assembly, outraged at these characterizations, declared war. The French were handily defeated with Napoleon III and an army of 150,000 people captured on September 2. The (?~10:36), along with smaller states, then had to join Prussia and in January 1871, the German empire was declared in the Hall of Mirrors at the Versailles Palace and all because of Luxembourg. Although much of the earlier opposition to Bismarck had died down at this point, he still had to forge a nation from these disparate states, one with its own institutions and its own culture. This was a fraught task, which he did in his signature style: more experimentally than surefootedly. Bismarck's specific moves to unite the many German states into a consolidated entity are now called 'negative integration', that is, building a community or nation by finding enemies or targeting certain categories of individuals to be outcasts. Negative integration is opposed to positive integration, based on acts like sharing values and building consensus among citizens. In the 1870s, Bismarck chose to harass, disadvantage, and insult Catholics with the idea of turning citizens against them and uniting Germany in opposition to Catholicism. The cluster of policies against Catholics was called kulturkampf and eventually Bismarck abandoned it, not because he didn't want it to work, but because there was widespread outrage among Germans, including Protestants, at the idea of upending religious toleration and making fellow citizens outcasts. Next, Bismarck targeted workers, especially social democrats, AKA socialists. Social democrats were increasing their numbers in elections and also, there were two assassination attempts on William I's life, which Bismarck used as an excuse for outlawing the social democratic party.

===== (12:00) to (14:00) =====

Obviously, it's very important to understand how negative integration works and how the systematic dehumanization of an other to unite a country can become not just problematic, but indeed, catastrophic, and I want to be clear that Bismarck didn't invent negative integration or anything, but he did use it. He also put into effect the first social welfare program in the West, which included accident and sickness protection for workers and also unemployment benefits, which were crucial, because beginning in 1873, Europe and the world experienced an economic downturn that started in industry, not in agriculture, as had been the case in the past. In a letter to his wife, Bismarck had called Prussia's defeat of France, "a great event in world history," and so it was, as in Italy and some would say the United States, victories of professional armies had created unified nations, and it's important to understand that nations were not inevitable or natural forms. Some were built on creating shared beliefs in constitutions. In others, negative integration was key to nation building, as countries identified themselves in opposition to others or by clearly defining what they weren't. In Germany, the aristocratic land-owning office corps became demi-gods to the citizenry that believed in them and in military might, while industrialists and economic innovators fell behind in political influence, and when you think about your own communities, whether that's a nation-state or a fandom, I think it's interesting to consider whether you are defined primarily by what you share or by what you are or defined primarily by what you are not or what you are opposed to. We'll see how the many ingredients of nation building evolved in ways both promising and terrifying as Crash Course heads toward the 20th century. Thanks for watching. I'll see you next time. Crash Course is filmed here in the Jaden Smith Studios in Indianapolis.

===== (14:00) to (14:22) =====

Thank you to Jaden Smith and, indeed, all of our Patrons at Patreon.com/CrashCourse. We've got lots of other Crash Courses including one about Artificial Intelligence that is absolutely fascinating. Thanks again for watching, and as they say in my hometown, don't forget to be awesome.