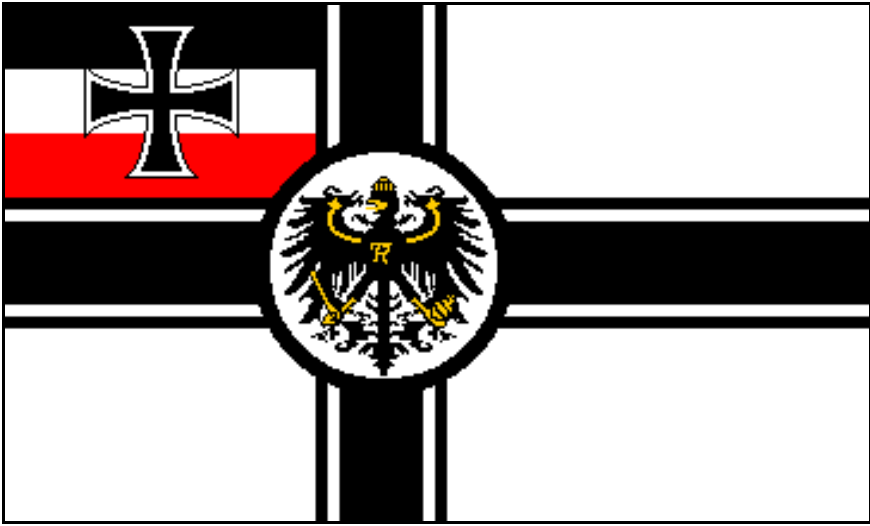


Germany in 1914



In 1862, Otto von Bismarck became President of Prussia. Over the next few years Bismarck helped to reorganize Germany under Prussia's leadership. In 1870 Bismarck ordered the Prussian Army into France. As a result of the Franco-Prussian War, France lost Alsace and Lorraine, Strasbourg and the great fortress of Metz to Germany.

By 1880, Chancellor Otto von Bismarck had unified Germany into a federation of 22 central European kingdoms or principalities. The largest of these states was Prussia. The King of Prussia, Wilhelm II, was also the German Emperor (Kaiser). The kaiser was extremely powerful and controlled ministerial appointments, foreign policy and the armed forces. Wilhelm II was jealous of Otto von Bismarck, and in 1890 was able to force him from power.

Germany's empire was small compared to the British Empire. However, in the 19th century Germany claimed three areas of Africa: German Southwest Africa, the Cameroons & Togoland and German East Africa. Other territory controlled by Germany included Northern New Guinea, Samoa, and the Chinese province of Shandong.

Germany's industrial development was the fastest in the world. Between 1880 and 1913, coal production had increased by 400 per cent. Other industries such as steel, chemicals, engineering, and armaments had also grown rapidly. In a thirty year period, Germany's international trade had quadrupled.

Between 1870 and 1910, the population of Germany had increased from 24 million to 65 million. Over 40 percent of this fast growing workforce was employed in industry. However, the 35 percent still working in agriculture ensured that Germany could produce enough food for its people.

The German government believed the country might be attacked by either France in the west and Russia in the east. In 1879, Germany and Austria-Hungary agreed to form a Dual Alliance. This became the Triple Alliance when in 1882 it was expanded to include Italy. The three countries agreed to support each other if attacked by either France or Russia.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, Germany was recognized as having the most efficient army in the world. Its structure included universal mass conscription for short-term military service followed by a longer period in reserve. In 1914, the regular German Army comprised 25 corps (700,000 men).

The German Navy was the second largest in the world in 1914. It had 17 dreadnoughts, 20 battleships, 5 battlecruisers, 7 modern light cruisers and 18 older cruisers. Germany also had 30 petrol-powered 10 diesel-powered submarines (U-boats), with 17 more under construction.

The German Army Air Service (GAAS) had been formed in 1912. Germany had been slow to see the potential of aircraft and the GAAS was considered to be inferior to the Aéronautique Militaire in France. In 1914, Germany had 246 aircraft and 11 airships.