

[Bismarck's Fall from Power, 1890](#)

Page published by Chris Fojtik on Monday, February 9, 2015

[A struggle for power between Otto von Bismarck and Kaiser Wilhelm II broke out immediately upon the death of Kaiser Frederick III (1888). The "dropping of the pilot" and the setting of a "new course" in 1890 signified the end of an era, a watershed in modern German history. Many contemporaries looked back upon Bismarck's dismissal as a tragic mistake, believing that he would have avoided the foreign policy blunders that plunged the German Empire into the disaster of World War I.]

But it was not foreign policy that drove kaiser and chancellor apart. The problem was what to do about organized labor. Clearly, the Anti-Socialist Laws of 1878 had failed to curb the growth of militant labor organizations. Bismarck aimed at confrontation, hoping that if the laws were allowed to lapse and workers went too far, he would be able to revise the Constitution of 1867-71 in an undemocratic fashion. Wilhelm, at least early in his reign, wanted to win the love of the workers, wooing them away from Marxist socialism with concessions. The occasion for the chancellor's resignation/dismissal was a technical matter over bureaucratic protocol. It only partially masked the true nature of the conflict, however. Wilhelm, ambitious to rule as well as reign, wanted to be free of Bismarck's overbearing influence. As one wit put it, Wilhelm wanted to be the bridegroom at the wedding, the corpse at the funeral. On the other hand, the irascible Bismarck clung desperately to power, unaware of his isolation or how his authoritarian ways with peers and underlings had alienated many who could have helped in his struggle. The gap in their ages and "styles" made for an intense contest of wills, but the outcome was a foregone conclusion. Bismarck had created an unassailable position for the monarch, immune even from the "iron chancellor."

*The major players in these events do not differ markedly over the facts of the case but rather what the facts mean. Bismarck gives his side of the story in his memoirs, *Gedanken und Erinnerungen*. So damning and unforgiving of Wilhelm II and so embittered, these chapters were, according to an agreement between Bismarck's heirs and his publisher, to be withheld from publication during the lifetime of the kaiser. But when Wilhelm fled to Holland in the last days of World War I, the publisher felt himself free to produce a third volume of the chancellor's memoirs, over the protest of the family. Bismarck's character assassination of Wilhelm and all those who sided against him in the critical hour is masterful. He presents himself as an aged and loyal retainer who put up with great injustice and ingratitude out of a sense of responsibility to the nation. But along side the pathos, Bismarck makes ample use of innuendo, impugns others' motives, and casts many aspersions, all in an effort to justify himself to posterity and to have his revenge. Source: *Otto von Bismarck, The Kaiser vs. Bismarck: Suppressed Letters by the Kaiser and New Chapters from the Autobiography of the Iron Chancellor*. (New York, 1921; repr. 1971), pp. 55-67, 78, 85-91, 94-105, 117, 120-21. Translated by Bernard Miall.]*

TEXT 1

When the Kaiser first began to entertain the idea of setting me aside, or when the resolve to do so was matured, I do not know. The idea that he would not share the glory of his future government with me was already familiar to him as a Prince, and was now ripe for realization. It was natural that place hunters...should attach themselves to the future heir to the throne as long as he was in the accessible

position of a young officer. The more probable it seemed that the Prince would succeed to the throne soon after his grandfather's death the more animated were the efforts to win the future Kaiser's support in respect of personal or party aims. The cleverly calculated phrase applied by Count Waldersee had already been used against me--namely, that if Frederick the Great had had such a Chancellor he would not have been Frederick the Great.

The difference of opinion which had arisen out of the Stöcker affair,...ended in at least an outward reconciliation.[1] ...On January 1, 1889, I received the following letter:

Dear Prince: The year which brought us such heavy afflictions and irreparable losses is coming to an end. The thought that you stand faithfully beside me and are entering upon the New Year with fresh strength fills me with gladness and consolation. With my whole heart I pray that you may be granted happiness, prosperity, and, before all, lasting health, and I hope to God that I may be long permitted to work with you for the welfare and the greatness of our Fatherland.

Wilhelm, [Imperator] R[ex]

Until the autumn no symptoms of any change of mood were observable; but in October, in connection with the Kaiser's presence in Russia, His Majesty was surprised that I advised against the intended second visit to Russia, and by his behavior to me gave me to understand that he was not well disposed toward me....A few days later the Kaiser set out on his journey to Constantinople, during which he sent me friendly telegrams relating to his impressions from Messina, Athens, and the Dardanelles. None the less, it came to my knowledge later that he had heard "too much talk of the Chancellor" while abroad. An eventual breach over this matter was increased by the witty and calculated remarks of my opponents, which referred among other things to the "firm of Bismarck and Son." [2]

In the meantime I had gone to Friedrichsruh on the 16th of October. [3] In my old age I was not for my own sake anxious to retain my position, and if I could have foreseen my early departure I would have arranged it in a manner more convenient to the Kaiser and more dignified to myself. That I did not foresee it proves that in spite of forty years' practice I had not become a courtier, and that politics absorbed me rather than the question of my position, to which no love of power or ambition chained me, but only my sense of duty.

In the course of January 1890, it came to my knowledge how keenly interested the Kaiser had become in the so-called "protection of labor" legislation [4] and that he had conferred upon the subject with the King of Saxony and the Grand Duke of Baden,...

It was repugnant to my convictions and my experience so far to encroach upon the independence of the worker, in his professional life and his rights as the head of a family, as to forbid him by law to exploit his own working capacities, and those of his family, according to his own judgment. I do not believe that the workingman is in himself grateful because he is forbidden to earn money on certain days, and during certain hours, as he may choose, even though the question was undoubtedly utilized by the Socialist leaders for the purposes of a successful agitation, with the misrepresentation that the employers were in a position to pay an unreduced wage for the diminished hours of labor. As for the veto upon Sunday labor, I have found by personal inquiry that the workers agreed to it only when

they had been assured that the weekly wage would be as large for six days as it had formerly been for seven. The prohibition or limitation of the work of children and adolescents did not commend itself to the parents of those forbidden to work, and among the adolescents it was welcomed only by individuals who followed hazardous ways of making a livelihood....

Be this as it may, it is a fact that the King of Saxony, in spite of all his good will for me, influenced the King's ideas in a direction which was opposed to that which I had advocated for years,...He had not anticipated that my dismissal from the service would be connected with this point of issue, and he deplored this result. [The Kaiser had been convinced by a number of high ranking ministers] that my senile obstinacy was a hindrance to his efforts to win over public opinion and to convert the opponents of the monarchy into adherents.

On the 9th of January the Reichstag reassembled. Even before Christmas, and again soon after, the Kaiser had recommended me, in a fashion that was equivalent to a command, not to come to Berlin for the session. On the morning of the 23rd, two days before the session ended, [Bismarck was informed] that a crown council [5] would be held at six o'clock on the following day, and upon my inquiring as to the object of the council, [the informant] replied that he did not know. My son...betook himself to the Kaiser during the afternoon, and in reply to his query as to the purpose of the council he received the answer that His Majesty wished to lay his opinion concerning the labor question before the ministry and desired that I should attend the council. On my son's remarking that he expected me that evening the Kaiser said that I had better not arrive until noon on the following day, so that I should not be settled in the residence, nor appear in the Reichstag, where the expression of my opinion, which differed from that of the majority, might endanger the party truce (but this was not said in so many words), and would be incompatible with the intentions of the All-Highest.

I arrived at two o'clock on the afternoon of the 24th. I called a session of the ministers for three o'clock....I moved, and the motion was accepted, that we intended to maintain a provisionally receptive attitude in respect of the imperial revelations, if these should be important, in order that we might thereafter discuss them confidentially among ourselves. The Kaiser had asked me to arrive half an hour earlier than the other ministers [attending the council meeting], at half past five, from which I concluded that he wished to discuss the intended communication with me beforehand. Therein I was mistaken; he vouchsafed me no hints as to what was to be discussed, and gave me the impression, when the council had assembled, that he had a pleasant surprise in store for us. He laid before us two projects, worked out in detail; one in his own hand, the other written to his dictations by an aide-d-camp, both promising to fulfill the Socialist demands. One called for the drafting and completion of a decree of the Kaiser's, expressed in enthusiastic language, and intended for publication, in the spirit of the detailed scheme. The Kaiser had this read by [Karl Heinrich] von Bötticher [*official of the Interior Ministry*], who appeared to be familiar with the text. This, to me, was surprising, not so much on account of its businesslike grasp...as on account of the practical aimlessness of the scheme, and its pretentious and exalted tone; this could only weaken the effect of the steps announced, and threatened to allow the whole affair to come to nothing, as a sort of speech of popular felicitation.

Yet more surprising was the monarch's frank written declaration, before his expert constitutional advisers, that this proclamation was based on the information and advice of four men, whom he described as authorities, and mentioned by name. One was Privy Councilor [Georg Ernst] Hinzpeter, an educationalist, who presumptuously and unskillfully exploited the remains of his reputation as a

teacher in his relations with his former pupils, [6] carefully avoiding responsibility; secondly there was Count Douglas, a rich and lucky speculator in mines, who had endeavored to enhance the consideration lent by a great fortune by the luster of an influential position near the sovereign; for this purpose, with ready and appreciative conversational powers, he established political, or perhaps rather politico-economic, relations with the Kaiser, and sought through friendly intercourse with the imperial children to contrive that the Kaiser should make him a count. In the third place there was the painter von Heyden, a society man, easily persuaded, who, thirty years before, had been a mining official in the office of a Schleswig magnate; today he was regarded as an artist in professional mining circles, while in artistic circles he was looked upon as a mining expert. He had, as we were told, based his influence over the Kaiser less upon his own judgment than upon his relations with an old workingman from Wedding, who served him as [an artist's] model for beggars and prophets, and from whose conversation he derived material for legislative suggestions which he made in the most exalted quarter.

The fourth authority whom the Kaiser upheld in the presence of his councilors was Governor von Berlepsch from Koblenz, who had drawn the Kaiser's attention to himself by his friendly attitude to labor during the strike of 1889, and had entered into direct alliance with him [thus circumventing Bismarck's authority]....

After the ensuing reading of the draft His Majesty declared that he had chosen the birthday of the great King [Frederick the Great] for this crown council, because the latter would provide a new and highly significant historical point of departure, and he wished the drafting of the decree alluded to in one of the detailed statements to be so expedited that it might be published on his own birthday (January 27). All the ministers who spoke declared that the immediate consideration and drafting of such refractory material was impracticable. I warned them what the result would be; the increased expectations and the insatiable covetousness of the socialist classes would drive the kingdom and the governmental authority on to precipitous courses; His Majesty and the Reichstag were speaking of the protection of labor, but as a matter of fact it was a question of the compulsion of labor, the compulsion to work less; and whether the deficiency in the income of the head of the family would be forcibly laid to the charge of the employers was questionable, because industries which had lost 14 per cent of their labor power through the Sunday rest would perhaps be incapable of carrying on, so that finally the workers would lose their livelihood. An imperial decree in the intended spirit would prejudice the coming elections, because it would alarm the propertied classes and encourage the Socialists. A further burdening of the costs of production would therefore be possible, and could be charged upon the consumers only if the other great industrial states were to proceed in a similar fashion....

The imminent close of the Reichstag session raised the question of a renewal of the [Anti-Socialist Laws], which would otherwise expire in the autumn. In the commission, in which the National Liberals struck the first blow, the authority to banish was expunged from the proposal of the Bundesrat; [7] consequently the question was raised whether the confederate governments would comply in this particular or whether they would wish to retain the power of banishment because of the danger that the bill might not be passed. To my surprise, and in contravention of my strict instructions to him, Herr von Bötticher proposed to introduce on the following day, when the last sitting of the Reichstag would take place, an imperial proclamation by which the projected bill would be revised in the sense desired by the National Liberals --that is, the power of banishment would

be *voluntarily* renounced--which could not be accomplished in a constitutional manner without previous consent of the Bundesrat. The Kaiser immediately agreed to the proposal....I...demanded that we should wait for the resolution of the full [Reichstag]; if it submitted an inadequate law this would have to be accepted, but if now, on account of a refusal, a vacuum were to occur which could not be filled, it would be necessary to wait for the occasion of a more serious infringement, which was finally to be anticipated. We should in any case have to lay a severer measure before the next Reichstag. The Kaiser protested against the experiment with the vacuum; he could not in any case allow matters to come to such a pass, at the beginning of his reign, that there would be a danger of bloodshed; that would never be forgiven him. I replied that whether it came to insurrection and bloodshed depended not on His Majesty and our legislative schemes, but on the revolutionaries, and that bloodshed could hardly be avoided unless we, while confronted by no admitted danger, determined to give way no longer, but to make a stand somewhere. The later the government began to resist the more violent must that resistance be.

The rest of the ministers, excepting Bötticher and Herrfurth, expressed themselves in agreement with me, some of them giving detailed reasons for their agreement. Here the Kaiser [was] visibly annoyed by the negative vote of the ministers....

[Wilhelm was determined to publish a decree demonstrating his concern for the needs of labor. Bismarck's resistance was gradually undermined by ministers who were unwilling to brook the kaiser's will.]

In order to appease the Kaiser's impatience to some extent, I gave the two drafts in question (for the Imperial Chancellor and the Ministry of Commerce) a style corresponding to his character and his desire for emphatic expression. On presenting them I declared that I had prepared them only in obedience to his command, and urgently begged him to refrain from publications of the kind, to wait for the moment when properly formulated and detailed proposals could be laid before the Reichstag, or at all events to allow the elections to go by before the labor problem was touched upon. The indefinite and universal character of the imperial proposals would arouse expectations which it would be impossible to satisfy, and their nonfulfillment would increase the difficulty of the situation. I wanted to be able to remember, when after months or weeks His Majesty should himself come to recognize the danger and prejudice which I feared, that I had advised him against the whole proceeding in the most positive manner, and that I had supplied the completed text only out of the dutiful obedience of an official who is still serving. I concluded with the request that the drafts which had been read aloud might be thrown into the fire then burning in the grate. The Kaiser replied, "No, no, give them to me!" and with some haste signed both proclamations, which were published, without counter-signatures,...[in the official newspaper on] the 9th of February [1890]. [9]

[Bismarck's hopes that the state council and an international conference on labor problems would modify or nullify the kaiser's decrees were disappointed. Foreign powers were all too willing to see the kaiser's government embark on a course of "self-injury," according to Bismarck. Individuals in the state council, on the other hand, lacked independence and moral earnestness. He concedes victory to Wilhelm in this matter.]

From his behavior to me, and from communications made to me later, I can only draw more or less accurate conclusions as to the changes of mood and opinion that occurred in the Kaiser during the

last weeks before my dismissal. Of the psychological changes in myself alone I can give some account, thanks to contemporary notes made from day to day. Each of us, of course, exerted a reciprocal influence, but it is not practicable to represent synoptically the parallel events which occurred on both sides. In my old age I did not cling to my position--only to my duty. The ever-increasing signs that the Kaiser--who was allowed to believe (by Bötticher, Berlepsch, etc.) that I was an obstacle to his popularity with the workers--had more confidence in Bötticher, Verdy, my councilors, Berlepsch, and other unofficial advisers than in me, made me consider whether and how far my complete or partial withdrawal without prejudice to the interests of the state might be advisable. Without any ill feeling, on many a sleepless night I considered the question whether I could and should extricate myself from the difficulties which I foresaw as imminent. I always came to the conclusion that I should be conscious of a feeling of disloyalty if I refused the conflict which I foresaw. I found the Kaiser's disinclination to share the glory of his coming years of rule understandable from a psychological point of view, and, any sensitiveness apart, he was clearly within his rights. The idea of being free of all responsibility, in view of my opinion of the Kaiser and his aims, was to me extremely seductive; but my sense of honor showed me this aversion from conflict and work in the service of the Fatherland as incompatible with a courageous sense of duty. I feared at that time that the crises which, as I believed, were before us would be upon us quickly. I did not foresee that their advent would be postponed by the abandonment of all anti-Socialist legislation through concessions to the different classes hostile to the Empire. I was and am of the opinion that the later they occur the more dangerous they will be. I regarded the Kaiser as longing for conflict, as he was, or remained while under alien influence, and I held it my duty to remain beside him, as a moderating influence, or eventually opposing him.

In the second week of February, when my impression was confirmed that the Kaiser wished to develop at least the socialist affair, in the belief that he could conduct it in a propitiatory manner, without me, and more indulgently than I thought advisable, I resolved to have the matter plainly understood, and said, in a colloquy, on the 8th of February, "I fear that I am in Your Majesty's way." The Kaiser was silent, signifying his assent. I thereupon amiably unfolded the possibility that in case I were first of all to resign my Prussian offices, retaining only that for which I had been recommended by my opponents more than ten years previously, that of the "old fellow at the Foreign Office," I might still continue to make the capital of my experience and confidence which I had won for myself in Germany and abroad useful to the Kaiser and the Empire. His Majesty nodded in agreement with this part of my statement, and finally asked, in a vivacious tone, "But I suppose you will still move the military requisitions in the Reichstag?" I replied, without knowing their extent, that I would willingly support them....I offered without more ado to postpone my resignation from the Prussian administration, if His Majesty so desired, until the day of the elections (February 20), so that it would neither seem a result of the elections nor yet affect them; for I considered that they were already imperiled by the the Kaiser's manifestoes....

In the ministerial session of the 9th of February I intimated my intention of resigning from the Prussian administration. My colleagues were silent, the expressions on their faces were various....I said to my son, "At the idea of being rid of me they all said, 'Ouf!' relieved and gratified!"....

Although I was fully convinced that the Kaiser wished to be rid of me, yet my attachment to the throne and my doubts as to the future made it seem cowardly to desist before I had exhausted all means that might guard the monarchy from danger or defend it. [The elections for the Reichstag

turned out badly from Bismarck's point of view.] On account of the composition of the Reichstag, and in order to advocate the [Anti-] Socialist policy hitherto followed, as well as the military requisitions, I now held that it was all the more necessary for me to remain until after the first parliamentary conflicts, so that I might help to insure our future against the Socialist peril. [*Bismarck is led to believe that the Kaiser, in light of the Reichstag elections, has given up his policy of indulgence toward the Social Democrats and that he fully backs his chancellor's intention to meet the socialist challenge head-on. Gradually, Bismarck learns otherwise.*]

While I was thus working for the realization of the imperial program the Kaiser himself, I am forced to believe, had given it up, without giving me any hint of it. I shall not attempt to decide whether he had been particularly in earnest over it. I was informed later that the Grand Duke of Baden, advised by [Baron Adolf] Marschall [von Bieberstein of the Foreign Office], had in those days warned the Kaiser against a policy which might lead to bloodshed; if it came to a conflict "the old Chancellor would be in the foreground again." ...according to my observations the Kaiser's resolution to allow the plan of campaign [against the Socialists] to drop dated from the period between the 8th and the 14th of March. I suppose it was repugnant to him to extricate himself openly in my presence, and instead of this, to my regret, the method was chosen of allowing me to remain in office until the June term [of the Reichstag]. The usual methods of business intercourse, with which I had until then been favored, underwent a decisive alteration during these days, so that I am obliged to conclude that the Kaiser not only regarded my services as unnecessary, but also as unwelcome; and that His Majesty, instead of telling me this in a friendly manner, with his former candor, urged my retirement by ungracious methods. Hitherto I personally had felt no ill humor. I was honestly ready to help the Kaiser to shape affairs as he desired. This mental condition of mine was first disturbed by the steps taken on the 15th, 16th, and 17th, which exempted me from any personal responsibility for my resignation from service and necessitated my breaking up a household which had existed for a lifetime at a day's notice; [10] yet to this day I have not with absolute certainty learned the actual reason of the rupture.

...On the morning of the 15th [of March], at nine o'clock, I was awakened with the news that His Majesty had just had it announced that I should make a report in...my son's official residence. There we received the Kaiser....I began my report: "I am able to inform Your Majesty that [Ludwig] Windthorst [11] has come out of his burrow and has sought me out." The Kaiser thereupon cried out, "Well, of course you had him thrown out." I replied...that I had naturally received Windthorst, since I had always been accustomed, as minister, to receive any member of parliament whose manners did not make him impossible, and since I was in duty bound to do so when any such member presented himself. The Kaiser declared that I should first have inquired of him. I differed from him, indicating my liberty to receive visits in my own house, particularly such as it was my official duty to receive, or such as I had a reason for receiving. The Kaiser insisted on his pretensions, adding that he knew that Windthorst's visit had been arranged through the banker, von Bleichröder; "Jews and Jesuits" always held together. I replied that I was greatly honored that His Majesty should be so exactly informed concerning the private occurrences in my house;...the choice of an intermediary was Windthorst's, not mine, and did not concern me. In connection with the constellation in the new Reichstag, it was a matter of great importance that I should know the plan of campaign of the leader of the strongest faction, and I was pleased to hear that he unexpectedly wished me to receive him. I had discovered, in the course of this conversation, that Windthorst intended to make impossible demands...To

ascertain his intentions had for me been a professional necessity....

The Kaiser asked me nothing as to Windthorst's plans, but began: "I receive scarcely any reports now from my ministers; I have been told that you have forbidden them to give me reports except with your consent or in your presence, and that you are relying on an old yellow order that was completely forgotten."

I explained that this was not the case at all. This order of September 1852, which had been in force as long as our Constitution had existed, was indispensable to every prime minister; it required only that he should be informed in the case of important proposals, which were new in principle, before the Kaiser's decision was obtained, for otherwise he could not shoulder the collective responsibility; if there was to be a prime minister, the substance of this order must be authoritative. The Kaiser asserted that the order in question limited his royal prerogative, and demanded its revocation. I called attention to the fact that His Majesty's three predecessors had governed the country under this order; since 1862 there had been no question raised in respect of it, for it had always been observed as a matter of course.... [12]

I then turned the conversation upon the dispatches which had come to hand concerning the visit to Russia, which His Majesty had announced for the summer. I again sought to dissuade him [from going], and in support of my arguments mentioned certain secret reports from St. Petersburg, which...contained unfavorable expressions which the Tsar was said to have employed concerning His Majesty and the last visit which His Majesty had paid him. The Kaiser demanded that I should read him a report of the kind which I was holding in my hand. I explained that I could not bring myself to do that, because the verbal contents would wound his feelings. The Kaiser took the paper from my hand, read it, and appeared to be justly wounded by the wording of the Tsar's supposed remarks. [13] ...I had hoped that the Kaiser would have listened to my decided refusal to inform him of the tenor of [the] report, as his father and grandfather would undoubtedly have done, and I had on this account confined myself to paraphrasing these passages, with the intimation that it followed therefrom that the Kaiser's visit was not welcome to the Tsar; that he would rather that it should not take place. The wording of the document whose perusal the Kaiser insisted upon, literally with his own hands, was undoubtedly extremely displeasing to him, and was intended to be so.

He rose, and offered me his hand--in which he was holding his helmet--more coldly than usual. I accompanied him to the outer steps before the door of the house. He was just about to step into the carriage before the eyes of the servants when he sprang up the steps again and shook my hand vigorously.

While already the Kaiser's whole attitude toward me could only produce the impression that he wanted to disgust me with the service and increase my ill humor to the point of seeking to resign, yet I believe that his fully justified irritation concerning the affronts [contained in the reports]...had for the moment encouraged the Kaiser in his tactics against me. Even if the change in the Kaiser's methods, and in his consideration for me, had not been intended, as I had incidentally supposed, to determine how long my nerves would hold out, it was nevertheless quite in the monarchical tradition that the bearer should be the first to suffer for the insult which might be contained in a message for the King. History ancient and modern contains examples of messengers who were sacrificed to the royal anger on account of the contents of messages of which they were not the authors....

At the close of the discussion I asked His Majesty whether he insisted upon expressly ordering me to withdraw the order of 1852, on which the position of the prime minister depended. The answer was a curt "Yes." I did not as yet decide upon an immediate withdrawal, but proposed to take the command, as one says, "Sunday fashion," and to wait until I should receive warning to withdraw [the cabinet order], when I would ask for a written order and bring it forward for discussion by the cabinet. I was even then convinced that I should not have to assume the initiative, and therewith the responsibility, for my retirement.

On the following morning, the 17th of March, [Chief of the Military Cabinet Wilhelm von] Hahnke returned, in order regretfully to inform me that His Majesty insisted on the revocation of the order, and was expecting, from the report which he, Hahnke, had given him of his conversation with me on the previous day, that I should forthwith hand in my resignation. I was to go to the palace in the afternoon, in order to take it myself. I replied that I was not well enough to do so and would write....

On the afternoon of the 18th of March I sent in my resignation. My draft of this resignation ran as follows: [14]

[Bismarck gives a reprise of all the conflicts, domestic and foreign, recounted above and then closes with:]

"It is very painful to me, in my attachment to the service of the Royal House and to Your Majesty, and after long years of familiarity with conditions which I had regarded as permanent, to sever myself from the accustomed relations with Your Majesty and the general policy of the Empire and of Prussia; but after conscientious consideration of Your Majesty's intentions, which I should have to be prepared to carry out were I to remain in the service, I cannot do otherwise than most humbly beseech Your Majesty graciously to please release me, with the statutory pension, from the offices of Imperial Chancellor, Prime Minister [of Prussia], and Prussian Minister of Foreign Affairs.

"After my impressions of the last few weeks and the disclosures which I gathered yesterday from the communications of Your Majesty's Civil and Military cabinets, I may in all respects assume that I am meeting Your Majesty's wishes by this my request for leave to resign, and also that I may safely assume that Your Majesty will graciously grant my request.

"I would have submitted the request for my discharge from my offices to Your Majesty a long time ago, if I had not had the impression that it was Your Majesty's wish to make use of the experience and the capacities of a faithful servant of your predecessors. Now that I am sure that Your Majesty does not require these, I am able to retire from public life without the fear that my decision will be condemned as untimely by public opinion.
von Bismarck"

[To which Wilhelm responded:]

"My dear Prince!

With deep emotion I have perceived, from your request of the 18th, that you are determined to retire from the offices which you have filled for many years with incomparable results. I had hoped that I should not be obliged to consider more closely the idea of parting with you in our lifetime. If I am

none the less compelled, in the full consciousness of the grievous importance of your retirement, to familiarize myself with this idea, I do it indeed with an afflicted heart, but in the confident expectation that the granting of your request will contribute toward sparing and preserving your life--irreplaceable to the Fatherland--and your energies, as long as possible. The motives of your resolve which you have put forward convince me that further attempts to persuade you to take back your offer would have no prospect of success. I therefore respond to your wish, in that I herewith grant you the requested discharge from our offices...with my good will and in the assurance that your counsel and your energy, your loyalty and devotion, will not fail me, and the Fatherland, in the future also. I have regarded it as one of the most merciful dispensations of my life that I had you beside me, as my first adviser, at the time when I succeeded to the government. what you have effected and attained for Prussia and Germany, what you have been to my House, my predecessors, and myself, will remain a grateful and imperishable memory for me and the German people. But even abroad your wise and energetic peace policy, which I, too, am resolved, in future and out of complete conviction, to make the pattern of my own dealings, will always be recollected with glorious approbation.

To reward your service adequately is not within my power. I must in this connection be satisfied with assuring you of my and the Fatherland's imperishable gratitude. As a token of this gratitude I confer upon you the dignity of a Duke of Lauenburg. I will also have my life-size portrait sent to you.

God bless you, my dear Prince, and grant you yet many years of an untroubled old age, illumined by the consciousness of duty loyally accomplished.

With these sentiments I remain, in the future also, in loyalty bound, your grateful
Kaiser and King,
Wilhelm, I.R.

END OF TEXT 1

[The ex-kaiser had the advantage of getting the last word in concerning the breach with Bismarck. He published his memoirs from exile after reading the long-suppressed third volume of Bismarck's Gedanken und Erinnerungen. One of his clear intentions is to undo some of the damage done by the chancellor's effective attack on his character. He portrays the old man as hopelessly out of touch with the will of the new Germany, especially in naval and colonial matters, autocratic in his dealings with others, even Wilhelm I, and not nearly as trusted by the high and the mighty as he thought he was. On the other hand, he, Wilhelm, had been long suffering, loyal, hard-working, and modest in his dealing with the chancellor. Although extremely ill-used, he bore no grudges. Source: Wilhelm II, The Kaiser's Memoirs (New York and London, 1922), pp. 1-4, 7-9, 11-12, 21-24, 28-29, 34-42. Translated by Thomas R. Ybarra.]

TEXT 2

Chapter 1. Bismarck

Prince Bismarck's greatness as a statesman and his imperishable services to Prussia and Germany are historical facts of such tremendous significance that there is doubtless no man in existence, whatever his party affiliations, who would dare to place them in question. For this very reason alone it is stupid to accuse me of not having recognized the greatness of Prince Bismarck. The opposite is

the truth. I revered and idolized him. Nor could it be otherwise. It should be borne in mind with what generation I grew up--the generation of the devotees of Bismarck. He was the creator of the German Empire, the paladin of my grandfather, and all of us considered him the greatest statesman of his day and were proud that he was a German. Bismarck was the idol of my temple, whom I worshiped.

But monarchs also are human beings of flesh and blood, hence they, too, are exposed to the influences emanating from the conduct of others; therefore, looking at the matter from a human point of view, one will understand how Prince Bismarck, by his fight against me, himself destroyed, with heavy blows, the idol of which I have spoken. But my reverence for Bismarck, the great statesman, remained unaltered.

While I was still Prince of Prussia I often thought to myself: "I hope that the great Chancellor will live for many years yet, since I should be safe if I could govern with him." But my reverence for the great statesman was not such as to make me take upon my own shoulders, when I became Emperor, political plans or actions of the Prince which I considered mistakes. Even the Congress of Berlin in 1878 was, to my way of thinking, a mistake, likewise the "Kulturkampf." Moreover, the Constitution of the Empire was drawn up so as to fit in with Bismarck's extraordinary preponderance as a statesman; the big cuirassier boots did not fit every man.

Then came the labor-protective legislation.[15] I most deeply deplored the dispute which grew out of this, but, at that time, it was necessary for me *to take the road to compromise, which has generally been my road both on domestic and foreign politics*. For this reason I could not wage the open warfare against the Social Democrats which the Prince desired. Nevertheless, this quarrel about political measures cannot lessen my admiration for the greatness of Bismarck as a statesman; he remains the creator of the German Empire, and surely no *one* man need have done more for his country than that....

The tragic element for me, in the Bismarck case, lay in the fact that I became the successor of my grandfather--in other words, that I skipped one generation, to a certain extent. And that is a serious thing. In such a case one is forced to deal constantly with old deserving men, who live more in the past than in the present, and cannot grow into the future. When the grandson succeeds his grandfather and finds a revered but old statesman of the stature of Bismarck, it is not a piece of good luck for him, as one might suppose, and I, in fact, supposed. Bismarck himself points that out in the third volume of his memoirs (p. 40)....

I feel no grudge against him for the third volume of his reminiscences. I released this volume after I had sought and obtained my rights. To withhold the volume any longer would have been pointless, since the main contents had become known already through indiscretions; were this not true, there might have been varying opinions as to the advisability in the choice of the time for publication. Bismarck would turn over in his grave if he could know at what time the third volume appeared, and what consequences it had. I should be honestly grieved if the third volume had damaged the memory of the great Chancellor, because Bismarck is one of the heroic figures whom the German people need for their regeneration. My gratitude and reverence for the great Chancellor cannot be impaired or extinguished by the third volume nor by anything else whatever.

In the first half of the 'eighties I had been summoned to the Foreign Office at the behest of Prince

Bismarck...I won the confidence of the Prince, who consulted me about many things. For instance, when the Prince brought about the first German colonial acquisitions [in Africa], I informed him, at his wish, concerning the state of mind created in the public and the navy by this move, and described to him the enthusiasm with which the German people had hailed the new road. The Prince remarked that the matter hardly deserved this.

Later on I spoke often with the Prince about the colonial question and always found in him the intention to utilize the colonies as commercial objects, or objects for swapping purposes, other than to make them useful to the fatherland or utilize them as sources of raw materials. As was my duty, I called the Prince's attention to the fact that merchants and capitalists were beginning energetically to develop the colonies and that, therefore--as I had learned from Hanseatic circles--they counted upon protection from a navy. For this reason, I pointed out that steps must be taken for getting a fleet constructed in time, in order that German assets in foreign lands should not be without protection; that, since the Prince had unfurled the German flag in foreign parts, and the people stood behind it, there must also be a navy behind it.

But the Prince turned a deaf ear to my statements and made use of his pet motto: "If the English should land on our soil, I shall have them arrested." His idea was that the colonies would be defended by us at home....

The political interest of the Prince was, in fact, concentrated essentially upon continental Europe; England lay somewhat to one side among the cares that burdened him daily, all the more so since Salisbury stood well with him and had, in the name of England, hailed with satisfaction the Double (i.e., Triple) Alliance, at the time of its formation. The Prince worked primarily with Russia, Austria, Italy, and Romania, whose relations toward Germany and one another he constantly watched over. As to the prudence and skill with which he acted, Emperor Wilhelm the Great once made a pointed remark to von Albedyll, his chief of Cabinet.

The General found His Majesty much excited after a talk with Bismarck, to such an extent that he feared for the health of the old Emperor. He remarked, therefore, that His Majesty should avoid similar worry in the future; that, if Bismarck was unwilling to do as His Majesty wished, His Majesty should dismiss him. Whereupon the Emperor replied that, despite his admiration and gratitude toward the great Chancellor, he had already thought of dismissing him since the self-conscious attitude of the Prince became at times too oppressive. But both he and the country needed Bismarck too badly. Bismarck was the one man who could juggle five balls of which at least two were always in the air. That trick, added the Emperor, was beyond his own powers....

Despite considerable differences in our opinions, Prince Bismarck remained friendly and kindly disposed to me, and, despite the great difference in our ages, [16] a pleasant relationship grew up between us, since I, in common with all those of my generation, was an ardent admirer of the Prince and had won his trust by my zeal and frankness--nor have I ever betrayed that trust....

My assignment at the Foreign Office brought a very unpleasant happening in its wake. My parents were not very friendly toward Prince Bismarck and looked with disfavor upon the fact that their son had entered into the Prince's circle. There was fear of my becoming influenced against my parents, of ultraconservatism, of all sorts of perils, which all sorts of tale bearers from England and "liberal

circles," who rallied around my father, imputed against me. I never bothered my head with all this nonsense, but my position in the house of my parents was rendered much more difficult for me and, at times, painful. Through my work under Prince Bismarck and the confidence reposed in me--often subjected to the severest tests--I have had to suffer much in silence for the sake of the Chancellor; he, however, apparently took this quite as a matter of course....

[Wilhelm describes the death of his father, Frederick III, after only ninety-nine days on the throne, his personnel appointments, and initial diplomatic efforts.]

Upon my return from Constantinople in 1889 I described to the Prince at his request my impressions of Greece, where my sister Sophie was married to the heir-apparent, Crown Prince Constantine, and also my Constantinople impressions. In doing this, it struck me that Prince Bismarck spoke quite disdainfully of Turkey, of the men in high position there, and of conditions in that land. I thought I might inspire him in part with essentially more favorable opinions, but my efforts were of little avail. Upon asking the Prince the reason why he held such an unfavorable opinion, he answered that Count Herbert [Bismarck] had reported very disapprovingly on Turkey. Prince Bismarck and Count Herbert were never favorably inclined toward Turkey and they never agreed with me in my Turkish policy--the old policy of Frederick the Great.

During the last period of his tenure of office as Chancellor, Bismarck declared that the maintenance of friendly relations with Russia, whose Tsar [Alexander III] reposed special trust in him, was the most important reason for his remaining at his post. In this connection it was that he gave me the first hints concerning the secret reinsurance treaty with Russia.[17] Up to then I had heard nothing about it, either from the Prince or the Foreign Office, although it happened that I had concerned myself especially with Russian matters....

When I was Prince Wilhelm, I was placed for a long time under the Chief President of the Province of Brandenburg, [Heinrich] von Achenbach [1829-99], in order that I might learn about home administration, get experience in economic questions, and, moreover, take an active part in the work. Spurred on by the captivating discourses of Achenbach, I derived from this period of my life a special interest in the economic side of the inner development of the country, whereas the purely judicial side of the administration interested me to a lesser degree. Improvements, canal construction, highway building, forestry, improvement in all kinds of transportation facilities, betterment of dwellings, introduction of machines into agriculture and their cooperative development--all of these were matters with which I busied myself later on; this being especially true of hydraulic work and the development of the network of railways, particularly in the badly neglected territory of eastern Germany.

I discussed all these matters with the ministers of state after I had ascended the throne. In order to spur them on, I allowed them free rein in their various domains. But it turned out that this was hardly possible so long as Prince Bismarck remained in office, since he reserved for himself the main deciding voice in everything, thereby impairing the independence of those working with him. I soon saw that the ministers, being entirely under Bismarck's thumb, could not come out in favor of "innovations" or ideas of the "young master" of which Bismarck disapproved.

The ministry, in short, was nothing but a tool in the hands of Bismarck, acting solely in accordance

with his wishes. This state of things was, in itself, natural enough, since a premier of such overwhelming importance, who had won for Prussia and Germany such great political victories, naturally dominated his ministers completely and led them despotically. Nevertheless, I found myself in a difficult position; the typical answer with which my suggestions were met was: "Prince Bismarck does not want that done; we cannot get him to consent to that; Emperor Wilhelm I would not have asked such a thing; that is not in accordance with tradition, etc." I understood more and more that, in reality, I had no Ministry of State at my disposal; that the gentlemen composing it, from long force of habit, considered themselves officials of Prince Bismarck.

Here is an example to show the attitude of the cabinet toward me in those Bismarck days: The question came up of renewing the [Anti-] Socialist Law, a political measure devised by Prince Bismarck for fighting socialism. A certain paragraph therein was to be toned down, in order to save the law. [18] Bismarck opposed the change. There were sharp differences of opinion. I summoned a crown council. Bismarck spoke in the antechamber with my adjutant; he declared that His Majesty completely forgot that he was an officer and wore a sword belt; that he must fall back upon the army and lead it against the socialists, in case the socialists should resort to revolutionary measures; that the Emperor should leave him a free hand, which would restore quiet once for all. At the crown council Bismarck stuck to his opinion. The individual ministers, when asked to express their views, were lukewarm. A vote was taken--the entire ministry voted against me.

This vote showed me once more the absolute domination exerted by the Chancellor over his ministers. Deeply dissatisfied, I talked over the matter with...[Chief of the Civil Cabinet Hermann] von Lucanus [1831-1908], who was as much struck as I was by the situation. Lucanus looked up some of the gentlemen and took them to task for their attitude, whereupon they made it clear that they were "not in a position" to oppose the Prince, and declared that it was quite impossible for anybody to expect them to vote against the wishes of the Prince.

The great Westphalian coal workers' strike in the spring of 1889 took the civil administration by surprise, causing great confusion and bewilderment, especially among members of the Westphalian provincial administration. From all sides came calls for troops; every mine owner wanted, if possible, to have sentries posted outside his room. The commanders of the troops which were summoned immediately made reports on the situation as they had found it.

[One of these was from a former military acquaintance of Wilhelm; it convinced him that, properly handled, the workers could be pacified without force and their legitimate grievances satisfied by reforms.]

...[Wilhelm decided] to summon the state council, include employers and employees in its deliberations, and bring about, under my personal direction, a thorough investigation of the labor question. I decided that in so doing guiding principles and material were to be acquired which would serve the Chancellor and the Prussian government as a basis for working out appropriate projects for new laws.

Inspired by such thoughts I went to His Excellency [Karl Heinrich] von Bötticher, who at once prophesied opposition on the part of the Chancellor to such action, and advised strongly against it. I stuck to my ideas....I said that it was my duty to take care of those Germans who were used up by

industry, to protect their strength and better their chances of existence.

The predicted opposition from Prince Bismarck was not long in coming. There was much trouble and fighting before I put through what I wanted owing to the fact that some of the big industrial interests ranged themselves on the side of the Chancellor. The state council met, presided over by me. At the opening session the Chancellor unexpectedly appeared. He made a speech in which he ironically criticized and disapproved the whole undertaking set in motion by me, and refused his cooperation. Thereupon he walked out of the room.

After his departure the strange scene had its effect on the assemblage. The fury and ruthlessness which the great Chancellor brought to the support of his own policy and against mine, based upon his absolute belief in the correctness of his own judgment, made a tremendous impression upon me and all those present. Nevertheless, it stood to reason that I was deeply hurt by what had occurred. The assemblage proceeded to take up its work again and turned out a wealth of material for the extension of that social legislation called into being by Emperor Wilhelm the Great, which is the pride of Germany, evincing, as it does, a protective attitude toward the laboring classes which as is not to be found in any other land on earth.... [19]

Later on I talked with Bismarck concerning his project of fighting the socialists, in case they resorted to revolutionary acts, with cannon and bayonets. I sought to convince him that it was out of the question for me, almost immediately after Wilhelm the Great had closed his eyes after a blessed reign, to stain the first years of my government with the blood of my own people. Bismarck was unmoved; he declared that he would assume responsibility for his actions; that all I need do was to leave the thing to him. I answered that I could not square such a course with my conscience and my responsibility before God, particularly as I knew perfectly well that conditions among the laboring classes were bad and must be bettered at all costs.

The conflict between the views of the Emperor and the Chancellor relative to the social question--i.e., the furtherance of the welfare of the laboring classes of the population, with participation therein by the state--was the real cause of the break between us, and caused a hostility toward me, lasting for years, on the part of Bismarck and a large part of the German nation that was devoted to him, especially the official class.

This conflict between the Chancellor and me arose because of his belief that the social problem could be solved by severe measures and, if the worst came to the worst, by means of soldiers; not by following principles of general love for mankind or humanitarian nonsense which, he believed, he would have to adopt in conformity to my views [if he did not resign].

Bismarck was not a foe to the laboring classes--on that I wish to lay stress, in view of what I have previously said. On the contrary! He was far too great a statesman to mistake the importance of the labor question to the state. But he considered the whole matter from the standpoint of pure expediency for the state. The state, he believed, should care for the laborer, as much and in whatever manner it deemed proper; he would not admit of any cooperation of the workers in this. Agitation and rebellion, he believed, should be severely suppressed; by force of arms, if necessary. Government protection on the one hand, the mailed fist on the other--that was Bismarck's social policy.

I, however, wished to win over the soul of the German workingman, and I fought zealously to attain this goal. I was filled with the consciousness of a plain duty and responsibility toward my entire people--also, therefore, toward the laboring classes. What was theirs by right and justice should become theirs, I thought; moreover, I believed that this should be brought about, wherever the will or power of the employers ceased, by the lord of the land and his government, in so far as justice or necessity demanded. As soon as I had recognized the necessity for reforms, to some of which the industrial elements would not consent, I took up the cudgels for the laboring classes, impelled by a sense of justice.

I had studied history sufficiently to guard myself against the delusion of believing in the possibility of making an entire people happy. I realized clearly that it was impossible for one human being to make a nation happy. The truth is that the only nation which is happy is the one that is contented, or at least is willing to be contented; a willingness which implies a certain degree of realization of what is possible--a sense of the practical, in short. Unfortunately, there is often a lack of this.

I was well aware that, in the unbounded demands of the socialist leaders, unjustified greed would be constantly developed anew. But, for the very reason that I wished to be able to combat unjustified aspirations with a clear conscience and in a convincing way, it behooved me not to deny recognition and aid to justified aspirations.

END OF TEXT 2

[An independent view of events is recorded in the diaries of Reichs-Chancellor Prince Chlodwig zu Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst (1819-1901), excerpts of which appeared in a popular periodical in October 1906. Wilhelm was incensed by the publication of the diaries, "unheard of without permission from the reigning monarch," as he wrote to the heirs. Source: Wilhelm Schröder (ed.), Das persönliche Regiment: Reden und sonstige öffentliche Äußerungen Wilhelms II (Munich, 1912), pp. 94-95. Translated by Richard S. Levy.]

TEXT 3

Strasbourg, 26 April 1890

On the 24th I traveled with the kaiser to the hunting lodge near Sufflenheim. The trip lasted about an hour during which the kaiser recounted, without interruption, the whole story of his quarrels with Bismarck. According to him, the dissension had begun in December [1889]. At that time the kaiser had demanded that something be done about the problem of labor. The chancellor was against it. The kaiser was of the view that unless the government seized the initiative, the Reichstag--that is, the Social Democrats, Centrists, and Progressives--would take matters in hand and the government would be left behind. The chancellor wanted to present the [Anti-] Socialist Laws, including the expulsion provision, to the new Reichstag. When the [Reichstag] rejected this proposal, and in the event of [worker] uprisings, [he would] intervene energetically. The kaiser opposed this. Had his grandfather, after a long and illustrious career, found it necessary to proceed against an uprising, no one would have thought less of him. It was different for him [Wilhelm II] because he had not yet achieved anything. It would be said of him that he began his regime by shooting his subjects to death. He was ready to intervene but wanted to do this with a clear conscience, after he had attempted to do all in his power to satisfy the legitimate demands of the workers. The kaiser therefore demanded that

a ministerial conference propose decrees along the lines of the one eventually proclaimed. Bismarck was wholly opposed to this. The kaiser then put the question [of what to do about the workers] to the state council and finally received the decree he wanted, in spite of Bismarck's opposition. But Bismarck worked against it behind the scenes....The relationship between Bismarck and the kaiser was shaken by these frictions, but the controversy over the cabinet order of 1852 intensified the embitterment. Bismarck had often advised the kaiser to let ministers come [directly] to him. And the kaiser did allow this. But when the traffic between the kaiser and his ministers became more frequent, Bismarck took umbrage at this and hauled out the cabinet order of 1852 in order to draw the ministers away from the kaiser. [20] The kaiser protested against this and demanded abolition of the cabinet order. Bismarck at first agreed but later would hear no more about it. Then the kaiser demanded that [Bismarck] either place the abolition order before him or his resignation....The prince [Bismarck] hesitated but then tendered his resignation on March 18.

An addendum to all this is that as early as the beginning of February, Bismarck had told the kaiser he would resign. But then he declared that he had changed his mind and would stay on. Although this was disagreeable to the kaiser, he did not argue. The story of the cabinet order came on top of this.

The visit of Windthorst to the prince also gave rise to unpleasant discussions but led to no decisive outcome. [21] In any case the last three weeks were full of disagreeable discussions between the kaiser and the prince. It was, as the kaiser put it, "heavy times" [eine hahnebüchene Zeit] and, he also said, a question of whether the Hohenzollern dynasty or the Bismarck dynasty ought to rule.

As far as foreign policy was concerned, the kaiser asserted, Bismarck went his own way and had withheld from him a great deal of what he was doing. Indeed, [Wilhelm] says, Bismarck had wanted it said in St. Petersburg that the kaiser wished to pursue an anti-Russian policy. But the kaiser added that he had no evidence for this.

END OF TEXT 3

NOTES

[1] Bismarck had at first favored using Court Chaplain Adolf Stöcker's (1835-1909) antisemitic campaign in Berlin to weaken the political hold of his left-liberal enemies in the capital. But Stöcker's rhetoric and the rowdiness of the movement he engendered soon turned the chancellor against him, especially after a pointed personal attack on Bismarck's personal banker and confidant, Gerson Bleichröder, a Jew. The then Prince Wilhelm moved in circles that supported the court chaplain and his Christian Social Party, the avowed purpose of which was to win workers away from godless Marxism and back to veneration of throne and altar. Stöcker for his part was actively attempting to drive a wedge between Bismarck and Wilhelm, hoping to dominate the young man after separating him from the chancellor.

[2] Many contemporaries believed that Bismarck was grooming his son, Herbert, who died in 1904, to be his successor.

[3] Friedrichsruh was Bismarck's estate in Lauenberg, the territory annexed by Prussia as a result of

the Danish War and conferred upon him after the victory over France by Kaiser Wilhelm I. Along with Varzin in Pomerania, the gift of the Prussian Parliament after the Austro-Prussian War of 1866, Friedrichsruh made Bismarck one of the great landholders of Prussia. The estate was two hours away from Berlin by rail. Bismarck spent much time there even before his dismissal. It is the site of his mausoleum.

[4] The protective measures being advocated by Wilhelm called for legal restriction of female and child labor and the prohibition of Sunday work. The Christian-Social rhetoric that accompanied these modest proposals offended many in the possessing classes and alarmed others.

[5] The crown council (Kronrat) was a special designation for a meeting of the Prussian state ministries with the king acting as president.

[6] Hinzpeter (1827-1907) was Wilhelm's former tutor.

[7] Composed of appointed representatives of the federal states, meeting in secret, and chaired by the minister-president of Prussia, that is, Bismarck, the Bundesrat wielded great power according to the Constitution. Although the Reichstag could propose its own legislation, most of the bills it considered were drafted by the Bundesrat. To become law, a bill required a majority in both the Reichstag and the Bundesrat. Although Prussia did not have a majority of votes in the Bundesrat, it could always gather them from the smaller states. Bismarck's insistence on including the provision that allowed the police to remove socialist agitators from their home areas seemed certain to rule out a possible compromise between liberals and conservatives and thus to assure the bill's defeat. It was widely believed that Bismarck intended precipitating a crisis at this point. But there is little agreement among historians as to the specific motives for undermining his own Anti-Socialist legislation.

[9] When the proclamations appeared without the constitutionally mandated counter-signature of Bismarck, they created a sensation which in turn affected the elections then going on. It was clear that the Anti-Socialist Laws were dead and that there was an open conflict between the kaiser and his chancellor.

[10] Although in office since 1862, Bismarck had only disdain for Berlin and never acquired a house there. Nonetheless, "breaking up his household" required making provisions for moving 13,000 bottles of wine to Friedrichsruh.

[11] Ludwig Windthorst [1812-91], former minister to the deposed King of Hanover and then leader of the Catholic Center Party, was a thorn in the flesh of Bismarck. A man of principle, eloquent, and unbullyable, he always gave Bismarck as good as he got. The recent Reichstag elections had greatly weakened the alliance of Conservatives and Liberals Bismarck had depended on and he was now seeking to construct a Conservative-Catholic bloc to replace it. Windthorst extracted several concessions before acceding to Bismarck's strategy.

[12] Ironically, the order had been formulated in 1852 expressly to keep Bismarck from undermining the authority of his superiors in the Prussian government. As minister-president of Prussia, he found it useful to prevent direct access to the king, a means of maintaining himself in power. But as he

spent more and more time at Friedrichsruh or Varzin, the order fell into disuse from the 1870s until he dusted it off for the present conflict.

[13] Tsar Alexander III was said to have called Wilhelm: "un garçon mal élevé et de mauvaise foi" (a badly brought up young man of bad faith). Knowing Wilhelm's impetuosity, Bismarck could have had little doubt that he would demand to see the comment. Wilhelm's humiliation was all the more delicious because it came at his own insistence.

[14] Bismarck intended the letter for publication but this was forbidden by Wilhelm. On the day of his death, Moritz Busch, his private secretary, published the letter in a Berlin newspaper where it served as an indictment of the kaiser from the grave.

[15] See note 4 above.

[16] When Wilhelm came to the throne he was 29; Bismarck was 73.

[17] The Reinsurance Treaty (1887) was part of Bismarck's elaborate network of diplomatic agreements which sought to protect the German Empire, particularly from France. Upon Bismarck's dismissal, Wilhelm II and his foreign policy advisors decided to simplify Bismarck's system and thus did not renew the treaty with Russia. France seized the opportunity to break out of its isolation by allying with Russia. The kaiser's critics regarded this decision as a fateful mistake, leading ultimately to the world war.

[18] See note 7 above.

[19] Wilhelm here attempts to deny credit to Bismarck for the pioneering social welfare legislation that accompanied the Anti-Socialist Laws.

[20] See note 12 above.

[21] See note 11 above.

FOR FURTHER READING

J. C. G. Röhl and Nicolaus Sombart (eds.), *Kaiser Wilhelm II, New Interpretations* (Cambridge, 1982); Otto Pflanze, "Toward a Psychoanalytic Interpretation of Bismarck," *American Historical Review* 77 (1972); Lothar Gall, *Bismarck: The White Revolutionary* 2 vols. (London, 1986).