A Conflict of Cultures: Alsace-Lorraine, 1871-1918

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A CONFLICT OF CULTURES
Alsace-Lorraine 1871-1918

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Introduction

A traveler viewing Alsace today for the first time would never suspect the difficult and stormy past which has plagued this beautiful little country. The fertile plains, the vineyards, and the Vosges mountains on the French side of the Rhine are mirrored on the German side of the valley, extending to the mountains of the Black Forest. The cultures of these two great civilizations, too, mingle here, enrich and reflect each other. Language is a perfect example of this junction of cultures. Most inhabitants are at least bilingual, speaking both the local dialect, which is of Germanic origin, and either French or German. Many are trilingual and speak all three languages with equal facility.

The situation has seldom been so tranquil, however. Alsace and Lorraine have long been disputed between France and Germany. Prized for their location, which is crucial militarily, and for their natural resources, the most important being coal and iron, the two provinces have suffered more than their share of invasions, seizures, and changes of government. As languages, customs, races, personalities, and governments mingle without necessarily integrating, the cultural pattern of the "parent" country is reflected. A study of Alsace-Lorraine is thus a study of the interaction of the French and the Germans.
In this paper I hope to show a bit of this relationship between France and Germany as the history of Alsace-Lorraine unfolds itself for analysis. The first chapter will briefly review the history of Alsace and Lorraine up to 1871. Originally provinces of the (German) Holy Roman Empire, Alsace and Lorraine gradually became French, both physically, through piecemeal acquisition of land by the French, and spiritually, mainly as a result of the French Revolution of 1789. The second chapter will examine in depth the attitudes, ambitions, and justifications used by both nations prior to the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine by Germany in 1871. This period leads directly to the third chapter, in which we will analyze political and social developments in the Reichsland, or imperial territory, during the crucial period from the Franco-Prussian War to World War I--the time of German rule over a territory that had been decidedly pro-French. Though the new rulers of Alsace-Lorraine tried their best to Germanize the inhabitants, we will see that the success of the program, despite its promising moments, was limited at best. In the end, the independent Alsatians and Lorrainers were returned to France, the mother country, where they continue to this day their celebration of their own unique culture.
Chapter I

To fully understand any portion of the history of Alsace-Lorraine, it is necessary to have a basic understanding of her entire past. Thus it is the purpose of this chapter to set out in brief the development of this area and the forces which shaped it.

Some common misconceptions persist about Alsace-Lorraine which need to be cleared up before we proceed. First of all, the idea of the "Alsace-Lorrainer" as a species must be scrapped. There is not now, nor has there ever been, any such person. Alsace and Lorraine were two separate and quite dissimilar provinces of pre-revolutionary France, with individual backgrounds, traditions, physical attributes, and outlooks. Technically, neither has existed at all since the French Revolution in 1789, when Lorraine became the departments Meuse, Moselle, Meurthe-et-Moselle, and Vosges, and Alsace the departments Haut-Rhin and Bas-Rhin. The two provinces were first unified into the entity "Alsace-Lorraine" in 1871, after the Franco-Prussian War, when France ceded to Germany all of Alsace, except the free city Belfort, and most of Lorraine. Alsace-Lorraine prior to this time must consequently be considered as her two components, Alsace and Lorraine.

To quote the expert David Starr Jordan, "It is generally
recognized that the question of Alsace-Lorraine is mainly
a question of Alsace." In the majority of this paper we
will be concerned with events and developments in Alsace; some
background on Lorraine, however, is still necessary and appro­
priate. 

Lorraine, a former province of eastern France bounded on
the north by Belgium and Luxembourg, on the north-east by
West Germany, on the east by Alsace, on the west by Champagne,
and on the south by Franche-Comté, first came into existence
around A.D. 800 as a part of the Holy Roman Empire of Charlemagne.
Prior to this time the area had been inhabited and governed
by a succession of Celtic and Germanic tribes, by the Romans,
and by the nomadic tribes during the Great Migration of Peoples
in the fifth century. Charlemagne's son, Louis the Pious,
succeeded his father but, without his strength and forceful
personality, was unable to hold the empire together. Upon
his death it was divided into three parts for three of his
sons: Charles II (Charles the Bald) inherited the western
section, which was to become France; Lewis the German received
the eastern section, the future Germany; and to Lothair, the
eldest son, went the imperial crown and the middle section,
which became known as Lotharingia.

In 959 the duchy was divided into Lower and Upper Lotharin­
gia, with the ducal authority in the latter going to Frederick I
of Bar of the House of Ardennes, which held it until 1033.
From 1033 to 1047, Upper Lotharingia was under the House of
Verdun; it then passed to the House of Alsace in 1048. During
the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, although the German
duchies in Lower Lotharingia split into a swarm of principalities, Upper Lotharingia remained for the most part in the hands of its dukes, relatively solid and coherent. Politically, both Upper and Lower Lotharingia continued as part of the Holy Roman Empire, while culturally, French influence became more dominant under the French kings Philip III (1270-85) and Philip IV (1285-1314) as the Holy Roman Empire weakened.

Gradually the French began to exert political influence as well. In 1297 the city of Metz was obtained by France; by 1301, the area was half French; in 1444, Charles VIII of France invaded Lorraine and demanded authority as part of his campaign to rebuild a strong monarchy in France. The Dukes of Lorraine and the Counts of Bar had become French as well as German princes back in the thirteenth century and as such took part in the destructive Hundred Years War between France and England (1337-1453). In the fifteenth century, Duke Charles the Bold of Burgundy made a play for power in Lorraine but was finally defeated by a joint Lorrainer-Swiss army early in 1477. Lorraine retained its independence. The Reformation and the wars which followed increased the influence of the French kings, still more during the sixteenth century. According to an agreement of August 26, 1552 (which was not ratified until 1561), the emperor Charles V, in desperate need of money, recognized the virtual secession of Lorraine and Bar from the empire, while they agreed to pay a fixed amount of annual taxes. The sudden French conquest of Protestant Germany led to the cession by the Germans of the bishoprics Metz, Toul, and Verdun to France at the Treaty of Chambord.
of January, 1552. The French under their new king Henry II also occupied theoretically independent Lorraine and Luxembourg at the same time. Though hostilities were renewed by Emperor Charles V of Germany, he was unable to regain any lost territory. It is this same conquest-oriented mentality which was to vindicate the Germans in their own eyes for their annexation of Alsace and Lorraine in 1871.

Though Lorraine was still theoretically independent under her dukes, she was virtually controlled by France in the seventeenth century, as actions described above led to further acquisitions. The Treaty of Westphalia (1648), which ended the Thirty Years War, confirmed the Treaty of Chambord and the concession of Metz, Toul, and Verdun. The French government offered the Duke of Lorraine impossible terms of peace and thus confirmed its true control over the territory. Parts of Lorraine occupied during the Thirty Years War in 1632 were evacuated by the French in 1661 only after more territorial concessions. The armies of Louis XIV occupied Lorraine once again in 1670. The Treaty of Ryswick in 1697 ended the War of the Grand Alliance between members of the League of Augsburg, consisting of the German Empire, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Spain and Sweden on the one hand, and Louis XIV of France on the other. Although France was not decisively defeated in this war, Louis XIV had to submit to the League's terms, and Lorraine was restored to its dukes, but only after more land was surrendered to France.

The eighteenth century finally brought the definite acquisition of Lorraine by France. Duke Francis III of Lorraine
was engaged to the Austrian heiress Maria Theresa, when in 1733 the War of the Polish Succession broke out between France and Austria. France immediately seized Lorraine. The peace settlement provided for the transfer of Lorraine and Bar to Stanislas Leszczynski, father-in-law of Louis XV, with the stipulation that the duchy pass to France upon his death, which occurred in 1766.

As an integral part of France, Lorraine shared with her the problems and successes of democracy: the Revolution of 1789, the revolutionary wars, Napoleon's rise and fall, the Restoration, and the Second Empire. After the Franco-Prussian War (1870), Lorraine was divided and relinquished in part to Germany.

In the minds of many authors, and even in the mind of the French people, Alsace was the dominant character in the forced union of Alsace-Lorraine. David Starr Jordan quotes the Alsatians of 1914: "The French people mourn for Strasbourg rather than for Metz." It was the statue representing Strasbourg, therefore Alsace, on the Place de la Concorde in Paris which was draped in mourning for over forty years, not the statue for Lorraine. It seems appropriate, then, to consider the political and social development of Alsace in greater detail.

The earliest known inhabitants of the area between the Rhine River and the Vosges, known today as Alsace, were Ligurians and, predominantly, Celts, near 2000 B.C. The five-hundred-year-long Roman domination of what they called Germania Superior brought along with its civilization the
longest period of peace which Alsace was to know—250 years. Subsequently invaded by the Alemanni, the Franks, the Sarmatians, the Burgundi, the Vandals, and the Huns, Alsace experienced both the hardships and the advantages of being a fertile crossroads of continental Europe.

The death in A.D. 869 of Emperor Lothair caused a struggle between the two grandsons of Charlemagne, Lewis the German and Charles the Bald of France, for possession of Lotharingia. The Treaty of Mersen settled the dispute in 870. Lotharingia was divided between France and Germany, and Alsace became a part of German Lotharingia. It was to remain a province of the Holy Roman Empire for eight hundred years. In the thirteenth century, with the fall of the ruling Hohenstaufen family, independent principalities developed in Lower Alsace, known as Nordgau, while Upper Alsace, or Sundgau, passed to the Hapsburg family. The Decapolis, the Union of Ten Free Cities, was established in 1354 in Nordgau, giving the Hapsburgs a slight measure of control there. Strasbourg became a republic under a bishop (at the suggestion of the emperor, Charles IV), while the League of Free Cities, under an imperial governor, controlled the rest of Nordgau for two hundred years, practically without external domination or influence.

The Treaty of Westphalia, which ended the Thirty Years War in 1648, provided for compensations for the victorious French in Alsace, though the terms were rather fuzzy. The ruling Hapsburgs of the German Empire relinquished their possessions in Sundgau but had only suzerainty to offer in
Nordgau. The French king Louis XIV, however, pressed for territorial concessions and spent the remainder of his reign incorporating the rest of Alsace. From 1677 to 1680, his "chambers of reunion," which consisted of selected French courts, declared his claims incontestable and annexed the free cities and most Alsatian principalities. In 1681 Louis XIV seized Strasbourg, the only surviving imperial city. What little remained of free Alsace finally fell to the French during the Revolution and the reign of Napoleon. The Congress of Vienna confirmed these last acquisitions in 1815.

Alsace and Lorraine both experienced a cultural and political renaissance in the eighteenth century. Authors of the Enlightenment such as the Frenchmen Montesquieu, Rousseau, Diderot, and Voltaire, the Germans Kant and Lessing, and the Americans Paine, Jefferson, and Franklin, expressed optimistic, bold, humane new ideas well-suited to the democratic, independent spirit which had developed in Alsace. Their philosophies encouraged a rational, scientific approach to all areas of human endeavor, a secular view of the world, and a general sense of progress and perfectibility. The Alsatians had been well-prepared for the new ideas by their past: they had become practically autonomous while the German Emperor waged his wars. Most say the new regime was greeted enthusiastically in 1789. Any disunity or opposition which might have sprung from the disadvantages of French trade laws, which went into effect after the Revolution, was quashed in 1792 with the outbreak of the revolutionary wars and their accompanying burst of patriotism. These wars grew in part from a problem
peculiar to Alsace: one-sixth of the province was still owned and governed by German princes who realized that the Revolution was a challenge to their dominance.8

A factor which tied the Alsatians still closer in spirit to France was Napoleon's rise at the turn of the century. It can be said that the Revolution made Alsace French, while Napoleon cemented the political bonds. The liberal Alsatians supported Napoleon's rise because of his liberal social policies and his Concordat with the Vatican of 1801. Although he put an end to democracy and republicanism, he continued unification (through wars) and social reforms. By 1815, when Napoleon suffered his famous defeat at Waterloo on June 18, the people had tired of his imperialistic wars. Prussia, at the Congress of Vienna (1815), pressed for the surrender of Alsace and Lorraine, but, fortunately, the other Allies resisted, knowing it would only lead to further hostilities.

The Prussians did not abandon their hopes, however, and would make the same demands again in 1871. The loss of the Rhine frontier (including Cologne, Aix-la-Chapelle, and Trèves) in 1814 had deeply wounded the French pride, and the Allies realized that more demands might provoke another war. The Rheinischer Merkur, a liberal Alsatian paper, admitted that in 1815 the Alsatians talked of burning villages and emigrating with their cattle to avoid being subjected to the petty German despots.9 Would fifty-six years greatly change their feelings toward the Germans?

The vacuum after Napoleon's fall was filled by the monarchy in the person of Louis XVIII. In 1830 the Bourbon
dynasty was restored, and Louis Philippe, Duke of Orleans, was chosen king. Though the Bourbon Restoration was better received in Lorraine than in Alsace, it aroused at best lukewarm support. The "bourgeois monarchy" faced pronounced Alsatian opposition, predominantly from merchants, factory owners, and lawyers, who resisted the monarchy's repressive policies. Protectionist tariffs ultimately produced an economic slide, especially in Mulhouse, which was dependent on its export textile industry. Financial and food crises plagued the land in 1816 and 1817, and Strasbourg's Rhine traffic trade was devastated. "In the long run, the 'bourgeois monarchy' lost favor in Alsace because it ultimately failed to advance the interests of the local commercial and industrial magnates." 11

Despite some dissatisfaction with the government, the Alsatians in 1848 enthusiastically celebrated the bicentennial of their annexation to France, 12 and the overthrow of Louis Philippe came as a surprise. 13 In Alsace and Lorraine, relative calm prevailed in the vacuum between governments, and a smooth transition from monarchy to republican councils was achieved.

Although little was happening within their own country to worry them, Bismarck's wars of 1864 and 1865 aroused alarm and apprehension in the Alsatians, who feared his next move—and they were not mistaken. Although Bismarck is often accused, and justly so, of having engineered the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, both sides entered the dispute with high hopes for success and territorial gains. It was as if Alsace had been wagered, and France lost the bet. Fighting began
in early August of 1870 in northern Alsace; the French surrendered on September 2.

In a larger sense, the Germans may have won this battle while losing a greater war. Their policy during the conflict of terrorization of civilians, intended to break Alsatian spirit, merely steeled their resolution. The bombardment of Strasbourg, in which 300 civilians were killed, 2000 injured, and 600 homes burned, did not endear the Germans to the natives. They could only watch while their beloved cathedral was damaged intentionally and without military justification. "Such was the first manifestation of the love of the Germans for their long-lost brothers."14
Chapter II

The two- or three-year period just prior to the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine by Germany is a very interesting one. An examination of the Alsatian and German attitudes of this time can shed some light on reactions and relationships which would develop during the period of the annexation itself. The Treaty of Frankfort of 1871 lays the foundation for the drama to be played out between France and Germany in Alsace-Lorraine. Justifications of the treaty (by the Germans) and reactions to it (by the Alsatians) will also be included in this chapter as further indications of the political and social temper which inaugurated the annexation.

Alsace was hardly a social "Garden of Eden" in 1869. Political unrest and discontent with the government of Napoleon III were growing, and religious, economic, and political schisms were deepening. The dissatisfaction with Napoleon III sprung mainly from disagreement with his aggressive international policies. How could the Alsatians be expected to support a war in which their country was the pawn? The new republic, which replaced Napoleon III after he was taken prisoner by the Germans on September 1, 1870, was greeted with hopes for a better-directed war, with a better chance of winning, or at the least, honorable peace negotiations. The traditional Catholic-Protestant antipathy in Alsace-Lorraine intensified.
Political divisions along religious lines were much stronger than usual in the last regular French parliamentary election in 1869. The anti-Catholic particularist movement gained momentum as war became imminent. The particularists proposed making Alsace a neutral state, theoretically independent of both Germany and France, but economically dependent on Germany. The particularists were pragmatists: they saw Germany's phenomenal economic development and sensed German victory in any war. And being anti-Catholic, they were also anti-Paris, that is, anti-French-government. But the particularists were far from popular with most Alsatians. The League of Alsace, a group of unknown membership dedicated to stopping all Germanization of Alsace, branded all particularists traitors. The particularist defense? They were merely being practical, trying to gain political and economic concessions from the next ruler of Alsace. And economically, Alsace needed any scrap of aid. Alsace, especially the city of Mulhouse, was highly dependent on its textile industry, which was very closely held by a few wealthy, inbred families. There was almost no upward mobility into management, and the owners felt little sympathy toward the commoners who worked for them. In June of 1870, a 20% wage reduction in the form of higher rents—workers lived in factory-owned housing—caused a major labor strike, crippling the textile industry. Late that summer, war coupled with the effect of the strikes made production impossible. Many Alsatians, appreciating the advantages of a well-disciplined state, realized that only German authorities could revive the failing Alsatian economy and
avoid a social revolution. Thus the rift between the practical pro-Germans and the sentimental pro-French in Alsace deepened.

The armistice agreement of January 29, 1871, provided for French elections to an assembly which would decide whether to continue the war, or the terms on which France would negotiate for peace. The election in Alsace-Lorraine could be viewed, then, as a plebiscite on annexation. It would show the strength of the various groups described above, as the Alsatians went to the polls to choose their representatives. The election was scheduled for February 8, 1871. Though the Prussians did all in their power to discourage the voters, even announcing a false change of election date, only the results than actually existed. Leon Gambetta, the great French proponent of "war to the end!" did win a seat in all four departments ultimately ceded to Germany. In Bas-Rhin, however, Jules Favre, who advocated peace on honorable terms, that is, probable annexation, received 54,514 votes to Gambetta's 56,271. The department Haut-Rhin returned two anti-German delegates, one autonomist, and Frederick Hartmann, who was the first to be labeled a traitor by the League of Alsace.

Many commentators have concluded that there was greater pro-war, anti-German unity of sentiment shown in the election results than actually existed. Léon Gambetta, the great French
proponent of "war to the end!" did win a seat in all four departments ultimately ceded to Germany. In Bas-Rhin, however, Jules Favre, who advocated peace on honorable terms, that is, probable annexation, received 54,514 votes to Gambetta's 56,271. The department Haut-Rhin returned two anti-German delegates, one autonomist, and Frederick Hartmann, who was the first to be labeled a traitor by the League of Alsace.

German attitudes and ambitions, on the other hand, can best be judged by their actions prior to the Treaty of Frankfurt, rather than by their opinions. The Germans, unlike the French, are not known for the lively vocal expression of any
and all emotions. Their reasoning was pragmatic, military, and conquest-oriented. Keep in mind that Germany at this time was, at best, a loose confederation of independent states fighting fiercely for ascendancy. They had little or no national sentiment. France, on the other hand, had been a nation for close to a thousand years and had developed a nationalistic, sentimental way of thinking. They saw the potential loss of Alsace-Lorraine not as the unavoidable result of a military defeat, but as the ruthless mutilation of their homeland. This divergence in points of view is the underlying cause of the whole problem of Alsace-Lorraine.

Germany's fundamental, overruling objective was military security. They felt that possession of the area west of the Rhine would protect them from French aggression. Nor was this a new notion. Prussia had pressed for the surrender of Alsace-Lorraine at the Congress of Vienna in 1815, and the demand had been a recurring political theme in Berlin since the 1840's. Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm on August 14, 1870, soon after the outbreak of war, expressed a common sentiment when he deemed it imperative to deprive France of some territory to keep her from disturbing the peace, but not necessarily to give the conquered territory to Prussia. General Heinrich von Trietschke put it bluntly: he said that even had the Alsatians been Japanese, Germany would have annexed them to capitalize on the military value of Metz and Strasbourg.

The Germans had other motives for annexation aside from the military matters. First of all, despite the Catholic-
Protestant schism, Alsace and Lorraine were 80% Catholic, which appealed very strongly to the Catholic South German states. Their eagerness to welcome new Catholics into the empire was more than religious conviction; political gain was the goal. Secondly, Alsace and Lorraine were very rich in natural resources, especially iron and coal. Because of economic trauma, the mines were not producing much in 1870, but the Germans had the technology and the determination to alter that situation. In 1913, for instance, of the 28,607,000 total tons of iron ore produced in Germany, 21,135,000 tons would come from Lorraine. Finally, it has been suggested that the Germans feared the French Revolution and its democratic principles. Democracy posed a direct threat to German feudalism and absolute monarchy. By confiscating French territory, German rulers may have hoped to keep France and her dangerous democratic ideas under control.

Once the Germans had decided that they needed Alsace-Lorraine, two major decisions remained. First, how much should they annex? Second, what would they do with the territory once it was theirs? It was a foregone conclusion that Germany would annex practically all of Alsace. The logical objective in the decision of the amount of Lorraine taken was to maximize insurance against French aggression and at the same time to minimize the area of French-speaking Lorraine annexed. Many of the generals of the dominant military, however, were after revenge. They wanted to permanently cripple France, not just slow her down. General Gustav von Alvensleben, for example, advocated taking all of France
east of the Marne River, a territory at least twice the size of Alsace-Lorraine. Metz, an extremely French city in Lorraine, was a pivotal issue in the dispute. Bismarck himself did not want Metz because he knew its annexation would only cause trouble and included it in the initial demands only as a point on which he could later compromise. But General Helmuth von Moltke emphasized its military value, equating its possession with 120,000 troops. King Wilhelm wanted it. The generals wanted it. Finally Bismarck agreed to the inclusion of Metz to avoid a falling-out with the military. Without Bismarck's moderating influence, Germany would probably have annexed far more territory.

Once the amount of territory to be included had been determined, the Germans still had to decide what to do with their new possession. There were several alternatives. Alsace-Lorraine could become a part of one of the existing German states. This practice was not at all uncommon—petty rulers were often rewarded for their loyalty (and their troops) with a present of part of the spoils of war. Prussia, the dominant state in the confederation, had the strongest claim, but all the South German liberals opposed that solution. Their suggestion was to give Alsace-Lorraine to Bavaria, the dominant South German state, but Prussia would have no part of that. Bavaria already seemed overly greedy, and their possession of Alsace-Lorraine would only increase the Bavarian-Prussian rivalry. Perhaps Alsace-Lorraine could become a neutral buffer state? No, that could never work, either. The autonomists in Alsace were strong, but not strong enough to
overcome the pro-French faction. Alsace-Lorraine must remain under the legal control of Germany. Finally it was proposed that Alsace-Lorraine become a Reichsland, a federal possession belonging to all the states together. This satisfied liberals and conservatives, Prussians and Bavarians, Catholics and Protestants. Many even hoped that owning common property would help unite the states into a great empire. Upon first thought, it may seem strange that the Germans did not consider making Alsace-Lorraine a state of the empire equal to all the others. But the Germans did not yet trust the Alsatians enough to give them autonomy--Reichsland status was supposedly a preparation for future statehood, which would never materialize.

Frederick the Great, Germany's most illustrious national hero, once said: "Let us take; after that we shall always find lawyers enough to defend our rights." This was not the case with Alsace-Lorraine. Long before the Treaty of Frankfort was signed, or even imagined, German lawyers and thinkers were busy preparing justifications for their country's ambitions. We have already examined Germany's motives; now let us inspect her defenses. Four basic justifications can be found, aside from the fact that the Germans were the victors and, as such, could do as they pleased: ethnology, linguistics, geography, and historical rights. Unfortunately, none of them hold up very well under close scrutiny.

Many skulls of the German dolichocephalic type were found in Alsace-Lorraine. While the Germans pointed to this as evidence of their prior claim to the land, all it really proves is that the long-headed Germans immigrated among the round-
headed Celts. In any case, racial boundaries no longer determine national boundaries. France and Belgium, for instance, are of the same racial stem: Switzerland has within its borders people of at least three distinct races.

With their second point, linguistics, the Germans hoped to establish a more solid claim. It was undisputed that a majority of the Alsatians spoke German as their mother tongue. But if one-language-one-nation was to be the German philosophy, there remained some inconsistencies to be resolved. How could Prussia absorb Poles, Slavs, and Danes? And linguistics certainly did not justify the inclusion of Metz, a thoroughly French city, in the annexed territory.

The geographic argument was that the Vosges mountains, the western border of Alsace, were the natural boundary between France and Germany. But why must it be the Vosges instead of, for instance, the Rhine River? Had the French won the war, the Germans certainly would not have agreed to relinquish their territory between the Rhine and the mountains of the Black Forest, an area symmetrical to Alsace. Nor were they consistent in the application of their principle. Much of the annexed portion of Lorraine lay west of the Vosges.

Their final argument was, that Alsace and Lorraine had been German before they were French, and for a much longer time. The logic of this could also be disputed. The Holy Roman Empire was the predecessor of the German Empire which Bismarck hoped to build, but it was definitely not the same creature. And Alsace and Lorraine had been loosely-held fringe possessions rather than whole-hearted participants in
the imperial grandeur. The (German) Holy Roman Empire, though
it officially held the territory for the longest, was not the
original ruler. Perhaps Alsace and Lorraine should pass to
the Italians, descendants of the Romans, who had an older
claim than that of the Germans. But the Italians had not
won the Franco-Prussian war; the Germans had. The right of
conquest, "to the victor go the spoils," was Germany's real
claim to hegemony.

Legally, the Treaty of Frankfort of 1871 resolved the
question. "France renounces, in favor of the German Empire,
all rights and titles to the territories situated east of
the frontier designated below. The German Empire shall possess
these territories forever, in full sovereignty and ownership."10
Although many respected Frenchmen urged the French government
not to sign, the Assembly of Bordeaux really had no alterna-
tive. They had to choose between "mutilation" and probable
annihilation. So on May 10, 1871, 1694 villages, towns, and
cities, 1,597,538 people, 5600 square miles--an area about the
size of Connecticut and Rhode Island--were ceded by France to
Germany "in full sovereignty and ownership."11

With the last flourish of the pen, the Germans considered
the problem settled once and for all. Twenty years later, in
1892, the Parisian newspaper Le Figaro asked the President
of the Reichstag, Herr von Lepetzow, about the problem of
Alsace-Lorraine. His reply was as follows:

In your letter of the twenty-fourth of last
January, you were so kind as to honor me with a series
of inquiries concerning the possibility of a peace-
ful solution to the "question of Alsace-Lorraine."
All these inquiries are answered by the provision of the first article of the peace preliminaries, confirmed by the treaty of May 10, 1871, between France and the German Empire and according to which the regions designated as the territory of Alsace-Lorraine are ceded forever, in complete sovereignty and possession, to the German Empire.

In referring to this clause of the treaty, I have the honor to beg you to accept the expression of my esteem.12

For the Alsatians, on the other hand, the Treaty of Frankfort had posed a question, not answered one. On February 17, 1871, the representatives to the National Assembly at Bordeaux from Alsace and Lorraine affirmed "the immutable will of Alsace and Lorraine to remain French," declared the settlement "a legitimate and permanent provocation to war," and stated, "We hold to be null and void every act and treaty, vote or plebescite, which would consent to the abandonment, in favor of the foreigner, of all or of any part of our provinces of Alsace and Lorraine."13 On March 14, 1871, they reiterated: "We declare once more null and void a compact which disposes of us without our consent."14 Before the final decision to sign the treaty, the representatives of the two provinces staged an emotional walkout to express their disapproval. This may have been a spectacular display of sentiment, but it also left Alsace and Lorraine unrepresented in the final deliberations.

Unfortunately, the German government accepted the protests at Bordeaux as an accurate gauge of the Alsatian mood. Certainly, the majority of the Alsatians still favored France, but conciliation was not as yet a lost cause. German officers stationed in Alsace reported that many Alsatians welcomed
the chance to rid themselves of the repressive French imperial government. The Germans, still insecure in their power, had two considerations to weigh: winning the sympathy of the new addition to their population, and their own national security. They felt that national defense could only be achieved by supressing the democratic spirit of the people, depriving them of the rights to which they were accustomed. Thus began a struggle for respect and autonomy which lasted for forty-seven years.
Chapter III

The only recurring motif for the events in the German Reichsland from 1871 to 1918 is suspicion. Confusion, misunderstanding, vacillation—these dominated German policies in Alsace-Lorraine. The German attitude is itself marked by a fundamental contradiction: the insistence by the authorities that their "long-lost brothers" were Germans was incompatible with the policy of Germanization imposed upon them. David Starr Jordan cites a typical German response to an inquiry about Alsace-Lorraine: "There is no question of Alsace-Lorraine: the land is German by tradition, by history, by language, by conquest, and by military necessity. Alsace-Lorraine must be forced to resume the Teutonism her people had relinquished."¹ If the people were so thoroughly German, what need was there to "Germanize" them? Though an anonymous German university student sees the Alsatian response a little more clearly, he maintains the same belief. "These people are Germans after all. Our professors tell us so. It is out of sheer perversity that they call themselves French. And yet, the more we cudgel them, the more French they claim to be and the less they like us."² With such a crack in the foundation of their policy, it is little wonder that efforts to Germanize the Alsatians and Lorrainers, to incorporate them into the empire, were a failure. Seldom can an honest
effort at conciliation or a sincere concern on the part of the government for the citizens of Alsace-Lorraine be discerned. Alsatian interests were consistently sacrificed to those of the Reich in all areas—political, military, and economic. The German authorities were convinced of the superiority of their imposed benefaction. As Trietschke affirmed, "We know better how to govern Alsace than the Alsatians know themselves." And in 1871, despite protests from the democratically-minded Alsatians, the period of "superior" German rule began.

The initial plan of government was itself offensive to the democratic, independent Alsatians. It divided the Reichsland into three "presidencies," Upper Alsace, Lower Alsace, and Lorraine. These in turn were divided into "circles," six in Upper Alsace and eight each in Lower Alsace and Lorraine. Each circle had its own Director. Supervising the entire Reichsland was a President-Superior, responsible only to the Kaiser. Being an imperial territory, not a state, Alsace-Lorraine was entitled to no representatives in the federal legislature. On December 30, 1871, the famous—or infamous—Dictatorship Article legalized arbitrary government in the Reichsland. "In the case of danger for the public safety, the President-Superior is authorized to take all measures which he may consider necessary to prevent this danger. He is, in particular, authorized to exercise, in the district threatened, the power conferred upon the military authorities in the case of the state of siege by the law of August 9, 1849." These military powers included the right to search homes, remove offenders, order the surrender of arms, and forbid
Thus the President-Superior was empowered to call out all troops stationed in Alsace-Lorraine and impose arbitrary rule whenever he deemed it "necessary."

With this threat of authoritarianism hanging over them, the number of Alsatians and Lorrainers who chose to exercise the only right granted them by the Treaty of Frankfort is not surprising. This right, Article Two of the treaty, was the citizenship option. "French citizens, born in the ceded territories, actually domiciled in the territory, who expect to preserve French citizenship, may do so, up to October 1, 1872, by means of a preliminary declaration made to the competent authority, and by means of transferring their domicile to France and fixing it there, without this right being subject to alteration by laws of military service, in which case they will retain French citizenship."  

There were, then, two parts to the option process: filing the option papers, and actual emigration. The League of Alsace encouraged all citizens to opt, to make their feelings known, but not to emigrate. They felt that Alsatians could best serve their country by remaining to protect her culture and fight for her interests. In Upper Alsace, the League's stronghold, 20% of the population (91,962 people) filed options; in Lower Alsace, only 7% of the population (39,190 people) opted; and in Lorraine, only 6% of the population (28,639 people) filed the papers. The emigration statistics, however, were reversed. In Lorraine, 75% of the optants emigrated; in Lower Alsace, 29% of the optants left; but in Upper Alsace, all but 18% of the optants remained.

Of the 160,000 options filed, the Germans considered only
60,000 valid, because the remainder did not emigrate. The effect of annexation on specific groups within the population is also interesting. Magistrates, for instance, were valuable to the new regime and were offered rewards in return for their continued cooperation. The Germans hoped to gain respect from the people and prove that "nothing had changed" in Alsace-Lorraine by preserving the local judiciary. Unfortunately, all but six of the magistrates emigrated. Overall, 80% of the local governmental officials opted to preserve French citizenship by leaving their homeland. Teachers had to weigh increased salaries and benefits against teaching the German version of history under German regulation. Charlemagne, for instance, was now known only as a German king. Many teachers also chose to emigrate.⁷

Embarrassed by the mass emigration, President-Superior Möller tried to make it more difficult for draft-aged minors to avoid German military service by going to France. On March 16, 1872, he declared that parents of minors had to opt as well for the children's options to be valid. This did not slow the mass draft evasion by the Alsatians. These men were not cowards; they simply did not wish to serve in the German army. Many of them, in fact, enlisted in the French army or the Foreign Legion. Neither the German policies of conciliation, such as better terms of service for the rich and the educated, nor coercion, prosecution of draft evaders, had much effect on the draft evasion rate, which was as high as 25% in 1879.⁸ But the 75% of the draftees who served in the German army are not to be ignored. The German army, along
with the schools, was to be the primary instrument of Germani-
zation. Its success, however, can be disputed. Alsatian
soldiers, considered too unreliable to serve in their sensitive
homeland, were often sent to Prussia for their tours of
duty. According to André Hallays, many of these young men
saw their task in doing their best in the Prussian army, and
in winning respect for themselves as Alsatians. They might serve in Prussia and become Germanized, says Hallays,
they resumed their comfortable (superior) Alsatian ways upon
their return.

The second important instrument of Germanization was the
school system, and the Germans attacked this phase of the
program with their usual zeal. By August of 1870 they had
already established administrative organs in the territory and
were regulating education and religion as well as keeping
order. Technically, they did not have the right to do this
until after the Preliminary Peace of March 2, 1871, but many
considered it legitimate as an act of war. Religion, edu-
cation, and language were inextricably intertwined in Alsace-
Lorraine and will thus be discussed together.

The Church had gained much control over education during
the reign of Napoleon III, who realized that priests and nuns
required much smaller salaries and were less expensive than
secular teachers. The Germans maintained, however, that edu-
cation was a function of the state and used the Concordat of
1801, in a round-about way, to achieve their goal. The status
of the Concordat, which was an agreement between Napoleon and
the Pope, was uncertain in Alsace-Lorraine after the annexation.
Under Article Seventeen of the Concordat, non-Catholic rulers of France lost the right to appoint priests and bishops, but could negotiate with the Pope to regain this right. Since Emperor Wilhelm I was neither French nor Catholic, could he be granted the right to name priests by the Pope? Or was the whole Concordat invalid? An official decision was never reached. The Pope at first declared Article Seventeen invalid in Alsace-Lorraine, which was meant to halt all government episcopal appointments. The Germans, however, interpreted this as an abrogation of the entire Concordat and a license to regulate religion in the Reichsland as they pleased. The Pope quickly changed his mind. The result of all this vacillation was de facto recognition by both church and state of the Concordat of 1801. To the Church, it was a safeguard from arbitrary German legislation. To Berlin, it was a means to secular control of education. The Church controlled the schools; if the German government controlled episcopal appointments, it therefore controlled education.

The first measures taken by the Germans were to increase salaries of teachers and to make attendance in elementary schools compulsory. Bismarck wanted to rid the school system of as many clerical instructors as possible. Jesuits, who were predominantly teachers, and some orders of nuns, were expelled from the Reich. Integration of sexes in some schools forced still more nuns to resign, because they wanted no part of the promotion of promiscuity among youngsters. Not surprisingly, Berlin found itself with a severe shortage of teachers in Alsace-Lorraine, which led to some reversals of
the teaching restrictions. Beginning in 1875, nuns were allowed to take the required state examinations. In 1879, Field Marshal von Manteuffel, the new governor, continued the policy of religious and educational conciliation by allowing normal schools on a confessional basis, as well as schools segregated by sex, and by reopening the petits séminaires, elementary schools for future priests, most of which had closed in the early 1870's.

The language issue was closely tied to the educational system. Contrary to popular belief, the Germans never enacted blanket legislation suppressing the use of the French language. They understood that it would have been impossible to force French-speaking adults to learn and use German; instead, they concentrated on school children. Time was on their side: by educating the youngest generation in the German language and ways, someday the whole Reichsland could be Germanized, physically, if not mentally. From 1871 to 1874, the teaching of French was prohibited in grade schools and all instruction was to be given in German. Nonetheless, many exceptions were allowed in areas where children needed to be bilingual. Though regulations in secondary schools were stricter, French was still used. Language requirements in normal schools were flexible until 1888. Due to differences in language patterns in the different parts of the Reichsland, Alsace and Lorraine had to be considered separately. Most Alsatians spoke either German or the local German-based dialect; still, 20% of the population of the Reichsland claimed French as their native tongue, predominantly in Metz and other sections of Lorraine.
Attempts to "fine-tune" language requirements, which began in 1890, led only to complicated groupings, confusion, and disruption of the educational system.\textsuperscript{15}

Language requirements were more than an educational issue; they affected all areas of political and social life. From the time of the annexation, there was local agitation for instruction in French, as German had been taught under French rule. The Alsatians had conveniently forgotten the 1860's, when Napoleon III had made a vigorous, though unsuccessful, attempt to impose the French language upon German-speaking natives of Alsace. The German reverse program would not enjoy much more success. Though the Reichsland's national assembly (the Landesausschuss) repeatedly passed motions requiring mandatory French instruction, the German government, not bound by local legislation, kept hedging and making excuses, while fining or imprisoning agitators.\textsuperscript{16} German was the official language of business, of the courts, of the public. German street signs went up, except in Metz, where the signs were allowed to be bilingual. One law required all new shop signs to be in German; storekeepers kept their old, dilapidated (French) signs as a matter of pride. Liquidation Totale (French) was now Totale Liquidation—by law. The usual inconsistencies were to be found even in the spiritual realm. Sermons were allowed to be preached in French every Sunday in Mulhouse, but only three times a month in Colmar.\textsuperscript{17}

German language requirements certainly had an effect on businesses in the Reichsland, but commerce and industry were more fundamentally affected by the annexation itself and its
accompanying tariff changes. Overall, German manufacturers tried to thwart the integration of Alsace-Lorraine into their economic system, because integration meant competition. Alsatian interests were sacrificed time and again to those of the federal states. Prospective programs for the Reich were tested using the conquered Reichsland as a guinea pig.

Alsace-Lorraine in 1871 had two major industries, textiles and iron, and one major river port, at Strasbourg. With the annexation, the Alsatian textile industry lost its French market, while the underdeveloped German industry gained potentially dangerous competition. The South German manufacturers pressured Berlin to negotiate for low tariffs so that the Alsatians would not take over their markets. The Alsatian textile industry united, ignoring their differences for the moment, to make overtures on their own behalf. High French-German tariffs would separate the spinning and weaving operations in Alsace from the finishing and dyeing operations in France. These efforts enjoyed limited success. The agreements provided for a transition period of two years, with gradually increasing tariffs until January 1, 1873. This would not be the end of the troubles for the textile industry, however. The high French protectionist tariffs of 1890-1902, known as the Mélène tariffs, also did their share of damage. In 1892, the new Chancellor Caprivi negotiated trade agreements with neighboring countries, disregarding Alsatian interests. The one with Switzerland hurt the textile industry, while the agreement with Italy squeezed many of the Alsatian wine producers out of their former markets. General European
depressions in the 1870's and 1890's were of no help. Alsatian industrialists who could afford to do so moved their operations to France, while others tried to accommodate themselves to the German market—a costly transition. Coarser materials were in demand in Germany, rather than the finer, more luxurious goods required for the French market, and modification of the equipment was expensive. Alsace-Lorraine lost considerable management, labor, and capital resources to France. An extreme case is the town of Bischwiller, which in 1869 had a population of 11,500 and a labor force of 5000. By 1874 the population had fallen to 7700 and the labor force to 1800. The number of weaving machines went from 2000 in 1869 to only 650 in 1874. The Lorraine iron industry, though checked by the annexation, held up well under the transition. Until 1895, there was no competition between the Lorraine and Ruhr iron industries. Lorraine produced cast iron, while the Ruhr factories manufactured steel products. All concerned would have benefitted from a proposed Moselle River canal project, which would have facilitated trade between the two areas. As the Lorraine industry developed, however, competition began and the project was dropped. The Rhineland coal and steel interests did not want steel products from Lorraine competing in their markets. The main conflict over the Rhine trade was between Strasbourg, in Alsace, and Mannheim, in Baden. The Rhine was quite navigable through Mannheim, but farther north, at Strasbourg, regulating the river, by dredging and riverbank improvements, would increase trade appreciably. The authorities haggled over details for years. Work finally started in 1907, with
Strasbourg and Alsace-Lorraine paying the majority of the costs. Strasbourg's position did improve: 1,988,310 tons of goods passed through the port in 1913, compared with 627,020 tons in 1907. Just when the future looked bright for the Alsatians, however, the Germans opened a port at Kehl, directly across the river from Strasbourg, with superior railroad connections. Once again, Alsace-Lorraine got the bad end of the deal, and economic integration was frustrated. Germanization was making no progress in the economic realm.

Alsace-Lorraine was used as a testing ground for at least two unsuccessful federal programs. Alcoholism had become a major cause of death in Alsace after 1870. Excessive amounts of inferior liquor were being imported from southern Europe, because of tariff advantages, and being imbibed by the Alsatians. Government experiments with taxes and liquor license fee increases had no effect on the alcoholism rate and only served to irritate the population. The other ill-starred government adventure concerned a federal tobacco monopoly similar to the one which already existed in France. The Strasbourg tobacco plant was already owned by the government, having simply passed from France to Germany with the Treaty of Frankfort. The Germans saw the healthy profit the French tobacco monopoly brought the government and wanted to try it themselves. The Strasbourg plant stockpiled huge amounts of tobacco products, especially cigars, in anticipation of an imminent government takeover. But a major difference existed between the German and French situations. The French had established their monopoly while the tobacco industry was still
undeveloped. The German government, on the other hand, could not afford the expropriation payments to its private entrepreneurs, and the monopoly bill was defeated in the Reichstag. This spelled disaster for the Strasbourg tobacco plant and the Alsatian planters. Both the quality and the quantity of Alsatian tobacco declined from 1871 to 1918, because the industry had no incentive to improve.

Just as economic integration was frustrated, so was political integration of the Reichsland into the Reich, as an examination of laws, constitutions, and political developments will demonstrate. Alternating periods of coercion and conciliation succeeded in alienating even the pro-German faction in Alsace-Lorraine.

The annexation started off with a period of repression. The Germans, justifiably insecure about their powers in the newly-won territory, wanted to make certain that the Alsatians and Lorrainers knew who was in charge. The Dictatorship Article of December 30, 1871, mentioned earlier in this chapter, is a prime example of their lack of confidence. Under international law, plenty of repressive legislation left over from the Napoleonic regimes was still valid in Alsace-Lorraine. Actually, the hated Dictatorship Article merely duplicated existing authoritarian powers. It was, however, more obvious to the public and caused popular agitation and general bad feelings. Even so, the Germans did not repeal it until 1902, during a period of concessions, because to do so would have been a sign of weakness.

Authoritarian government was not the only aspect of the
Pan-Germanist campaign. The Pan-Germanists were the ultranationalists in Germany, whose objective in Alsace-Lorraine was to convince the government that more strictness was always called for. Because of the temperament of the people, they felt that many "lois d'exception," or Germanization laws, were necessary. Language regulations predominated, but many other areas were included. For instance, one law was passed suppressing the Alsatian Society of Mechanical Construction, because its leader was a Frenchman. In general, these laws were ignored and resented. As Paul Déroulède put it, "The struggle against the French language is one of the most ridiculous aspects of the pan-germanist campaign. ... They would even germanize red skirts and blue skies." Resentment of the "lois d'exception" led to explicit rebellion and intentional disregard of the laws. David Starr Jordan quotes an anonymous Alsatian: "When the last Pan-germanist shall be put under the sod, on that very day Alsace will find herself germanized as if by enchantment and with the best grace in the world." The aspect of German rule most resented by the Alsatians was probably their loss of autonomy, of influence over their own destinies. This frustration was expressed by another unnamed Alsatian: "It is as easy to make the feelings of Alsace understood at Berlin as to inject by osmosis the essence of violet through the skin of a hippopotamus." The Germans did indeed govern the Reichsland without input from its inhabitants. Not until 1918, in a last-ditch effort to keep the area from being returned to France, did an Alsatian head the
territorial administration. To placate the people, beginning in 1874, Berlin granted Alsace-Lorraine several rights in the federal government. Never, however, were these rights absolute, because they were granted by the federal government and could have just as easily, if circumstances warranted, been withdrawn. As of January 1, 1874, Alsace-Lorraine was entitled to fifteen representatives in the Reichstag, the lower house of the federal legislature. Laws concerning Alsace-Lorraine now needed the consent of the Reichstag, rather than being enacted solely by the emperor and the Bundesrat, the upper chamber of the legislature. A Landesausschuss, or local legislature, was created to serve an advisory role—it might be consulted on legislation concerning Alsace-Lorraine, when such consultation was convenient. The Alsatians immediately elected fifteen “protestaires,” or protesters of annexation, to represent them in the Reichstag. They obviously were not yet willing to be Germanized.

On July 4, 1879, Alsace-Lorraine was granted a "Constitution." The Landesausschuss was doubled in size and given the power to propose legislation. They could not enact it, however; all legislation needed the approval of the Bundesrat, which consisted of the German princes. The position of Statthalter was created to replace the President-Superior, and the Statthalter was responsible only to the Kaiser. This "constitution" represented a recognition of the dissatisfaction of the people, not a step toward self-government. No rights were guaranteed. The first Statthalter was Field Marshal von Manteuffel, who has been described as an "iron hand in a velvet glove."
Manteuffel was a diplomat—experienced, friendly, courteous, well-liked—and a good choice for the job. He tried very hard to get to know the Alsatians and to reassure them about their new government. He even used French in unofficial encounters. Much of the progress that he might have made, however, was nullified by his lower ministers, who sought to discredit him and gave him little support. Besides, Manteuffel was first of all a Prussian, and occasionally he had to enforce unpopular repressive legislation. Upon his death in June, 1885, the government could see no physical signs of the progress of Germanization and decided to change its tactics.

Manteuffel's successor, Prince Chlodwig von Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst, was cold and reserved, the embodiment of the government's irritation with the recalcitrant Reichsland. The period of greatest repression in Alsace-Lorraine was during Hohenlohe's administration. Increased militarism was becoming a way of life in Germany, as the country geared up for the wars to come. In 1887, the government tried to pass the notorious Law of the Septennate, which would provide for military appropriations for a period of seven years, thus depriving the legislature of all control over the military. When the Reichstag protested, it was dissolved by Bismarck, who took the question to a referendum. Through violent campaigning and exaggeration of the imminent danger of war, the military won its victory at the polls. Despite government success in the federal states, Statthalter Hohenlohe's attempts to use the war scare to gain cooperation in Alsace-Lorraine failed. The Alsatians once again elected fifteen "protestaires"
to the Reichstag. The "protestaires" received 82,000 more votes in this election than in 1874.\textsuperscript{25} The Alsatians had obviously not learned their lesson, and Bismarck was more than happy to lend a hand with their discipline. A period of punishment and repression followed the election. Alsatian organizations were attacked and dissolved. No exclusion of Germans as members or use of French was allowed. The required use of passports for any non-German entering Alsace-Lorraine was enacted on June 1, 1888. No French military personnel were granted passports at all, and they were allowed only in exceptional cases for others. The official German doctrine was that it was the French, not the Germans, who terrorized Alsace with their peer pressure.\textsuperscript{26} The Germans were obviously doing the Alsatians a great service by cutting off all communication with the former homeland, though the Alsatians did not appreciate their efforts. There may have been other motives for the passport policy, as well. The new Chancellor Caprivi, who replaced Bismarck in 1890, said that the passports were effective as a means "to deepen the gulf which separated France from Germany."\textsuperscript{27} Statthalter Hohenlohe wrote in his memoirs on May 8, 1888, that the ulterior motive to the soon-to-be-imposed passport system was to drive the Alsatians to revolt so that martial law could be enacted.\textsuperscript{28} Repression continued throughout the administration of Hohenlohe, with the censorship of mail and newspapers. Finally the Germans were beginning to see some "progress," tangible effects of their repressive programs. The Alsatians and Lorrainers quieted their resentment.
By 1894, when Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst was made Chancellor, the Germans no longer felt threatened by the Alsatian insistence on autonomy and individual rights. Prince Hermann von Hohenlohe-Langenburg was appointed Statthalter, and the government began making some concessions. They loosened the passport restrictions, then removed them altogether. Less censorship was enforced. Finally, in 1902, the despised Dictatorship Article of the Law of December 30, 1871, was repealed. The mood was right for reform. All over Germany a self-consciousness was beginning to stir, a desire to end the autocratic rule of the Kaiser and give more power to the parliament and to the people. Germans started to question voting procedures. All of Germany elected its officials by a class voting system, with more weight placed upon the upper-class, educated portion of the electorate. Prussia did not even have a secret ballot. The people in general and the liberal political parties also demanded autonomy for Alsace-Lorraine, although this was very low on the government's list of priorities. The official government stance was that Alsace-Lorraine needed to prove itself "worthy," to meet some vague conditions. Any reform in the Reichsland must be consistent with the security of the Reich and strengthen Alsatian-German ties. Still, some action would have to be taken in the Reichsland. German immigrants there were second-class citizens as well, and they were getting restless. The Alsatians had been restless for more than three decades. In the end, the general demand for reform was answered with minimal change.

In 1907, Hohenlohe-Langenburg was replaced as Statthalter
by General Count Karl von Wedel, a very autocratic supporter of the Kaiser. Despite his conservative beliefs, Wedel knew that constitutional reform in Alsace-Lorraine was necessary for him to attain his political goals, and his public stance was that it was time for the Germans to show some trust in the Alsatians. In 1909, Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg, a Prussian bureaucrat, was appointed Chancellor. Despite his cautious, conservative approach to reform, he, too, recognized the need for change in Alsace-Lorraine. On March 15, 1910, he announced the government's agreement to a new constitution for Alsace-Lorraine, and on April 30, even the emperor added his approval. Thus the way was cleared for reform—but the Landesausschuss, the Alsatian legislature, was not to be consulted as to the changes. The Alsatians still had not proved themselves worthy of the government's trust.

The new Constitution of Alsace-Lorraine was approved on May 26, 1911, by the Reichstag. The Landesausschuss was made bicameral, with the lower house to be elected by universal manhood suffrage. The effects of these liberalized voting procedures were minimized by a three-year residence requirement, plural voting based on age, and gerrymandering by the federal government. The upper chamber was controlled by Berlin. The Landesausschuss was granted illusory budget power. If the Alsatian budget disagreed with the one desired by the German government, Berlin could still levy taxes and spend at will. Because the executive branch was still the German bureaucracy, the Landesausschuss had no means of enforcing its legislation. Alsace-Lorraine was granted three
votes in the upper chamber of the federal legislature, the Bundesrat, but they had to vote as the Statthalter directed, thus protecting the emperor's interests. Their votes were nullified, however, if Prussia thereby gained a majority, thus protecting the interests of the other states. Consequently, the Alsatian voting right meant absolutely nothing. Limitations on the use of the French language were included in the constitution. There was no assurance of permanence, because the constitution could be amended by the federal parliament, not by the Landesausschuss. Most importantly, no mention was made of Alsace-Lorraine's legal status. The Alsatians' one great desire, autonomy within the Reich, was ignored once again. Alsace-Lorraine remained a federal territory.

The Constitution of 1911 understandably led to disillusionment among the people of Alsace and Lorraine. It was followed by a government crackdown on malcontents, from 1911 to 1914. Abbé Wetterlé, the editor of a Colmar paper, was fined and imprisoned for his protests. A merchant in Mulhouse was expelled from Alsace for requesting a hotel band to play the "Marseillaise." Any merchant suspected of French sympathies was persecuted by a boycott enforced by the government. The Alsatian cartoonist Hansi of Colmar was prosecuted for treason in 1914 because of a caricature of a Pan-Germanist high school teacher. Despite the Alsatians' disenchantment and the government's impolitic response, the Constitution of 1911 led to a more national outlook in the Reichsland. In the first local election under the new law, in 1911, basically conservative,
clerical sentiments appeared. But the recently-formed Nationalbund, a party dedicated to protecting regional interests and to full autonomy and equality within the empire, suffered a crushing defeat. Any party, to be successful at the polls, had to advocate Alsatian nationalism in some form, but the government frowned upon this particularism. The Nationalbund was too radical, even for the Alsatians. In the 1912 parliamentary elections, national issues outweighed the regional. War and peace, military budgeting, and foreign policy measures were important to the people. The founding of the Mittelpartei, a party which stressed a closer bond with the empire, and of a pro-German wing in the Alsace-Lorraine Center party, were promising signs of a future conciliation. Then the progress of forty-two years was destroyed by the Zabern affair.

Zabern ("Saverne" in French) was a little town of 9000 inhabitants in the Vosges foothills of northern Alsace, with no special distinction—until the autumn of 1913. A young German lieutenant, Baron von Fürstner, displayed his immaturity in his relationships with the Alsatian troops under his command. He offered a ten-mark prize to anyone to "stick" any Alsatian who might "assault" him. When he went out to buy chocolate, he had himself guarded by four soldiers with bayonets. In general, he behaved in a ridiculous and belligerent manner, and was mocked by the people for his childishness. His commanding officer, Colonel von Reutter, supported him and took the law into his own hands. He prepared for a siege, stationed soldiers with machine guns on street corners, and initiated arbitrary arrests. People were arrested for laughing, for
not moving, for moving too quickly. On November 25, the Reichstag debated the problem of Zabern and later passed a motion censuring Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg for his lack of response. For the first time, a question of Alsace concerned all of Germany. The Minister of War, General von Falkenhayn, pronounced that Förstner's actions were not insults because he did not know that "his words would become known to the public." The ignominious treatment of citizens continued. On December 2, Förstner attacked a civilian group, who allegedly laughed at him, and severely injured a lame cobbler. The cobbler had shown "disrespect" and protested his innocence, and as his punishment, Förstner slashed him in the forehead with his sword, while soldiers held him still. Several townspeople, including three judges of the civil tribunal, were arrested one evening on their way home and held overnight at the military jail. Testimony given at the session of the Higher Court-Martial at Strasbourg, which began on January 5, 1914, is informative. A Lieutenant Schadt's justification for arresting the judges of the civil tribunal was as follows:

The public prosecutor was particularly provocative. One of the judges said to me, "I will take no orders from you." Naturally I arrested him. I had every man whom I suspected of laughing at us arrested. As they were too cowardly to do it to our faces one had to be guided by presumption. We were obliged to break into some houses to catch the delinquents.

The Court-Martial acquitted Schadt on the grounds that he was obeying orders. Reutter, the commanding officer, was acquitted because he was innocent of the intent to violate the law. And Förstner was acquitted because he had exercised his right of
"punitive self-defense"—the cobbler was carrying a pocket knife in his pocket. Count Karl von Wedel, the Statthalter, and many of the local officials resigned.

The Zabern affair was an unquestionable victory for the military caste in Germany. The army belonged to the Kaiser, and the Kaiser was sovereign. The civil authority, represented in the Reich by Bethmann-Hollweg and in the Reichsland by Wedel, was powerless in comparison. Bethmann-Hollweg did not handle the affair as the parliament would have liked, and thus received a vote of no confidence, but there was little else he could do. Alsace was still a conquered province, no different than in 1871. The lack of respect shown the people of Alsace and Lorraine indicates how those in power regarded their "long-lost brothers" after forty-two years.
Conclusion

Did Germanization make any progress in Alsace-Lorraine from 1871 to 1918? On the surface, perhaps; fundamentally, no. The underlying Alsatian spirit was not altered by German laws and policies. Repression interspersed with conciliation led only to distrust and suspicion, not to improved relations. "Current" doggerel of 1913 expressed the Alsatians' sentiments:

"Français ne peux,
Prussien ne veux,
Alsacien suis." ¹

"French I can't be,
Prussian I won't be,
Alsatian I am."

First and foremost, an Alsatian considers himself Alsatan. And he considers all Alsatians Frenchmen, no matter what the native tongue.

Forty-seven years under German rule did certainly change the Alsatian way of life. Many Alsatians would have preferred autonomy in 1919 to a reunion with France.² And the subsequent reunification posed difficulties for much of the population. German immigrants and Alsatians who had grown up under the German regime suffered the same problems of adaptation as the French citizens of Alsace and Lorraine had experienced in 1871. Many Alsatian Germans held on to their loyalty to their German homeland: 18,000 Alsatians died for Germany in the second
World War. But when the Germans occupied Alsace again during World War II, their efforts at Germanization were just as unsuccessful as during the 1871-1918 annexation.

How successful did the people of that time consider the German attempts? Count von Caprivi, who in 1890 would become Chancellor, admitted in 1888, "It is a fact that after seventeen years of annexation, the German spirit has made no progress in Alsace." Jacques Preiss, a representative to the Reichstag and leader of "Young Alsace," in 1896 elaborated on the same idea:

Gentlemen, the people of Alsace-Lorraine protested in 1871. They protested through their representatives, specially elected for that purpose, against the annexation to Germany. This protest has not been withdrawn since, either in law, or in fact. . . . The assimilation, the Germanization of the country has not advanced a step to this day. . . . Fear poisons our political existence. The Government does not understand the people, and the people do not understand the Government. . . . History will say: "The German Empire succeeded in conquering Alsace-Lorraine materially, but its administration did not know how to conquer her morally, did not know how to win the heart and soul of the people." Neither the governors nor the governed considered the Germanization program a success. The attempts were neither systematic nor enduring, and the results satisfied no one. The Zabern affair was the final insult for both the Alsatians and the German civilian government. It demonstrated the attitude of the true rulers of Alsace, the military: the Alsatians were conquered people, unworthy of equality or even of respect. Germanization had not made much progress among the military rulers either.
We will, of course, never know what might have happened if war had not broken out in 1914. The Germans could have continued their policies, while time did its work, changing the outlook and character of the people. But why were the attempts which were made so unsuccessful? Prince Alexander, son of Statthalter Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst, theorized that the conquered provinces could successfully have been governed in three different ways—none of which were adopted by the government. First, Alsace and Lorraine could have been partitioned among the existing federal states. In this way the Alsatians would have been full German citizens, while there would have been little need to worry about a dangerous revolt. Second, Alsace-Lorraine could have been made an equal federal state within the empire. Militarily, the Germans felt too insecure to enact this option, as was discussed in Chapter II. The third solution would have been to express a genuine respect for the needs and desires of the Alsatians.6 In Chapter III we saw how the Germans actually treated the Alsatians: as guinea pigs, as a military necessity, as a vanquished nation. As David Starr Jordan points out, a Franco-German understanding would have alleviated much of the tension, because friendliness to one nation would not have been treachery to the other.7 No such understanding was achieved until much later, after World War II.

The Alsace of today, though typically French, is very proud of its own culture: its language, its legends, and its traditions. When I asked a woman from Strasbourg about the French influence on Alsace, she responded emphatically, in
French, that one cannot speak of the French influence on Alsace, because the latter is itself French. Even during the period of German domination, the Alsatians thought and acted as Frenchmen, though they expressed themselves in German. Germanization of Alsace-Lorraine, a very complex concept, was a simple failure. No trace of the German efforts remains today.
Notes

Chapter I:
2 Information for the remainder of Chapter I was taken from the following books and encyclopedias:


Chapter II:

1 Information on the social, political, and economic situation of Alsace-Lorraine in 1869 is from Chapter 2, "Local Attitudes and German Aims 1869-1871" in Reluctant Union by Dan P. Silverman.

2 Election data: Silverman, pp. 25-27.

3 Silverman, p. 30.

4 Silverman, p. 30.

5 Hazen, p. 86.

6 Hazen, p. 94.

7 Silverman, p. 32.

8 Silverman, p. 32.

9 Hazen, p. 78.

10 Hazen, p. 3.

11 Hazen, pp. 5-6.

12 Hazen, p. 7.

13 Hazen, p. 13.
Chapter III:

2. Jordan, p. 34.
3. Hazen, p. 104.
4. Hazen, pp. 113-114.
5. Silverman, p. 66.


15. Silverman, p. 78.
17. Silverman, p. 80.

18. Industrial figures are from Chapter 9, "Political Economy in the Reichsland" in *Reluctant Union* by Dan P. Silverman.

Conclusion:


5. Hazen, p. 162.


Bibliography


