



Volume 3. From Vormärz to Prussian Dominance, 1815-1866
The National Association on a German Constitution (1860)

The declaration of the National Association on the question of a German constitution (from September 4, 1860) clarifies the Association's view that a German nation-state was only possible on the basis of a liberal reform government in Prussia.

The German people will never give up its claim to federal unity, which is recognized by the united authority of the Confederation and by all individual German governments, and has found legal expression in the Reich Constitution of 1849.

Accordingly, the National Association sees itself called upon to work toward the creation of a uniform central power and a German parliament using all legal means. The central power's authorities include, above all, supreme military command and exclusive representation abroad.

The National Association expects that every German tribe will voluntarily make the sacrifices that are necessary to attain Germany's greatness and unity. The Prussian people, above all, must show that, in spite of its brilliant history and in spite of the hegemonic status of the Prussian state, it feels itself to be part of the German people and that, like any other German state, it will subordinate itself to the German central power and parliament.

If the Prussian government will energetically look after Germany's interests in every regard and take the indispensable steps toward establishing German power and unity, the German people will surely entrust the transfer of central power to the head of the largest purely German state.

The National Association will not renounce any territory of the German Confederation. It recognizes Austria's German provinces as natural components of the Fatherland and will joyfully welcome the moment that will enable the joining of these provinces to a united Germany.

The commonality of blood, history, and interests points us toward the most heartfelt connection with them, to a connection made closer than any before by the correspondence of political institutions and by the most uninhibited intellectual [spiritual] and economic exchange. But, in case the power of circumstances and insuperable obstacles should hinder the German parts of Austria from simultaneously joining the German federal state, the Association will not let this prevent it from seeking the unification of the rest of Germany.

However the relationship of these provinces to the rest of Germany may be shaped in the near future: the Association remains firmly confident that, in the long run, this inextinguishable inner community cannot be without the proper form of external political unity.

Source: *Verhandlungen der ersten Generalversammlung des deutschen Nationalvereins* [*Proceedings of the First General Assembly of the German National Association*], 1860, p. 15 ff.

Original German text reprinted in Ernst Rudolf Huber, ed., *Deutsche Verfassungsdokumente 1851-1900* [*German Constitutional Documents 1851-1900*], vol. 2, *Dokumente zur deutschen Verfassungsgeschichte* [*Documents on German Constitutional History*], 3rd ed., rev. and enl. Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1986, pp. 108-9.

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