

The National Association on a German Constitution (1860)

Abstract

This declaration of the National Association on the question of a German constitution clarifies the association's view that a German nation-state was possible only on the basis of a liberal reform government in Prussia.

Source

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

Accordingly, the National Association considers it its duty to work for the creation of a unified central power and a German parliament by all legal means. The powers of the central authority shall 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 achieve the greatness and unity of Germany. Above all, the Prussian people 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 vigorously protects the interests of Germany in every respect and takes the indispensable steps toward establishing German power and unity, then 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 relinquish any part of German federal territory. It recognizes the German provinces of Austria as natural components of the fatherland and will joyfully welcome the moment that makes possible the annexation of those provinces to a united Germany.

The commonality of blood, history, and interests point us toward the most heartfelt connection with them, to a connection made closer than any hitherto by corresponding political institutions and by the most uninhibited intellectual/spiritual [*geistigen*] and economic exchange. However, if 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 allow this to prevent it from seeking the unification of the rest of Germany.

In whatever way this may shape the relationship of those provinces to the rest of Germany in the near future, the Association remains confident that this indissoluble inner community cannot go without the proper form of external political unity in the long run.

Source: *Verhandlungen der ersten Generalversammlung des deutschen Nationalvereins*, 1860, p. 15 ff; reprinted in Ernst Rudolf Huber, ed., *Deutsche Verfassungsdokumente, 1851–1900*, vol. 2, *Dokumente zur deutschen Verfassungsgeschichte*, 3rd ed., rev. and enl. Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1986, pp. 108–09.

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