

A brief history of Germany

The Country known today as Germany was occupied by German tribes from about 500BC and from the 2nd Century BC was in repeated conflict with the Romans.

The area was controlled by the Franks from the 6th Century who went on to Christianize the region. The empire was divided in 843, the Eastern part becoming the Frankish Kingdom and centre of Germany.

Medieval Germany was ruled by a series of hereditary dynasties. The first of these was the Saxons and the Holy Roman Emperor, Otto the Great in 963.

The 11th, 12th and 13th centuries were dominated by struggles and conflicts between the emperors and popes over the investiture controversy (a dispute concerning the right of secular rulers to appoint Bishops).

In the 13th century the first Hapsburg emperor was elected and from the 15th century the imperial title remained almost continually in the family.

The 16th and 17th centuries were dominated by religious strife and led to a division of the country into a protestant north and catholic south that wasn't resolved until the end of the 'thirty years war' in 1648.

In 1701 Prussia became a German state under Fredrick the great and became a dominant force within Europe. In 1806 Napoleon defeated the Holy Roman Empire. The post Napoleonic Germany was dominated by Austria and Prussia the latter of which extenuated its influence on the region with victory in the Austro-Prussian war (1866) extinguishing Austrian influence on Germany. The situation came to a head in the Franco Prussian war and in 1871 Bismarck finally created the German Empire.

During the late 19th and early 20th century Germany saw much industrialization and began colonizing parts of North Africa. The international aspirations of the German Empire were a contributing factor of the First World War. The empire was defeated in 1918 and replaced by the Weimar Republic.

The financial struggle that followed the First World War in Germany was one of the contributing factors that led to the rise of Hitler as the leader of a New German Empire in the 1930's. A combination of Hitler's aggressive foreign policy and eventual invasion of Poland precipitated the Second World War (1939-1945).

Following Germany's defeat in the Second World War the country was divided into British, French, US and Soviet occupation which led to the formation of two separate states; The German Democratic Republic (East Germany) and The German Federal Republic (West Germany).

On October 3rd 1990 after 45 years of 'Cold War' Germany was Reunified and Berlin was made capital of Germany