

Relations between German State of Prussia and the Catholic Church reach an all-time low in 1875.

In February of that year, Pope Pius IX had issued an encyclical declaring that the Kulturkampf (Falk and May) laws issued by Prussian Minister of Culture Adalbert Falk were invalid and non-binding on Catholic priests. In response, the Prussian government began a campaign to deprive all priests of government subsidies unless they provided a written declaration that they would obey the law of the land.



This editorial sketch appeared in the satirical journal *Kladderadatsch*. Titled “Zwischen Berlin und Rom (translates “Between Berlin and Rome),” captures the high-stakes conflict between church and state, depicted as a chess game. The players are German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck and Pope Pius IX (1792-1878, elected 1846).

The caption reads:

[Pius IX]: “The last move was certainly unpleasant for me; but the game is not up yet. I still have a very nice move in petto!”

[Bismarck]: “That will be your last one, and then in a few moves you will have lost – at least for Germany.”

Next to Bismarck’s right hand are papal chess pieces representing Church possessions confiscated by the Prussian State. Bismarck’s queen is Germania; another of his pieces is labeled “press,” and his pawns bear the insignia legal paragraphs from the Kulturkampf (Falk and May) laws designed to diminish clerical influence.

The Pope’s chess pieces include papal encyclicals, the Syllabus of Errors (1864), and excommunication. The pope warned German Catholics that they could be excommunicated for supporting the harsh *Kulturkampf* laws.

Comprising one third of the German population, Catholics exerted pressure on the Empire through passive resistance, not violence. Catholics mobilized their support by setting up numerous civic organizations and raising money to pay people’s fines. Catholics’ faith was strengthened. Most major anti-Catholic legislation was dismantled between 1880 and 1887. Adalbert Falk, the Prussian Minister of Education who designed the “May Laws,” became the scapegoat for the policy’s failure and was forced to resign.



Many sick and wounded victims of the Franco-German War were tenderly nursed back to health and happiness by the loyal members of this devoted company. In eighteen Field and Base Hospitals, the Sisters were engaged during and after the war. Many cases of typhoid and smallpox had developed and were cared for by those Sisters. The “Iron Cross”, a great mark of distinction was bestowed by the German Government upon Sister M. Frances for “faithful service on the battlefield” at that time.