



Volume 5. Wilhelmine Germany and the First World War, 1890-1918
The Bundesrat Regulates the Economy (August 4, 1914)

In Imperial Germany's federal system, both the Reichstag (the German federal parliament) and the Bundesrat (the federal chamber representing the states) were responsible for legislation. With the start of war, decision-making processes were streamlined and the Bundesrat was tasked with regulating the economy. The Prussian Ministry of War in Berlin was responsible for coordinating many of these actions. Its authority grew rapidly during the war.

We Wilhelm, by the Grace of God German Kaiser, King of Prussia, etc.,

decree the following in the name of the Reich, with the consent of the Bundesrat and the Reichstag:

§ 1

In the event that the timely execution of an action required for the exercise or maintenance of rights of exchange, or rights relating to payment by check, is hindered by *force majeure* as a result of war, the prescribed time limits for taking such action are to be extended for as long as it takes to execute such action after the removal of the hindrance – at least, however, for six workdays after the removal of the hindrance.

A hindrance by *force majeure* exists, in particular:

1. when the place where the action is to be executed is occupied by the enemy, unless the action can still be executed with the necessary precautions;
2. when the lines of postal communication needed to execute the action are severed to the extent that normal postal traffic no longer exists.

§ 2

Regardless of the provisions of § 1, the prescribed time limits may be extended for a certain period of time by Royal Decree, with the consent of the Bundesrat, either throughout German territory or in sections thereof.

This provision also applies to all German protectorates abroad, with the proviso that the consent of the Bundesrat is not required.

§ 3

The Bundesrat is empowered for the duration of the war to order the legal measures deemed necessary for the relief of economic distress.

The Reichstag is to be informed of these measures at its next meeting, and it may demand that these measures be rescinded.

§ 4

This law shall take effect upon its proclamation. The time at which this law expires shall be determined by Royal Decree with the approval of the Bundesrat.

Certified by our Royal Signature and Seal.

Wilhelm Delbrück

Source: *Reichsgesetzblatt* 1914, p. 327 f., reprinted in Wolfdieter Bihl, ed., *Deutsche Quellen zur Geschichte des Ersten Weltkrieges* [*German Sources on the History of the First World War*]. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1991, pp. 52-53.

Translation by Jeffrey Verhey and Roger Chickering