

strengthening of England, Germany, the United States, and Japan. Newspaper editors and cultural pundits referred to these years contemporaneously as the "dawn of a new era" in scientific development, peace, economic expansion, and cultural civilization. Without war or major conflict in sight, Europe set out to perfect its home and spread its perfection throughout the world. The order of the day was, quite simply, self-improvement, national improvement, and attainable perfection; the great successes of Europe during these years seemed to prove that such was possible. Unfortunately, certain paternalistic policies developed out of such a perspective. While we cannot apologize for brutal treatment of Africans and Asians during the imperial period, we can understand such practices as the manifestations of a European polity that thought it was implementing the true inheritance of its liberal heritage. Further, though no major war seemed to threaten, the forty years after 1871 erupted in World War I, a catastrophic war that tore through Europe with a brutality unanticipated by any of its combatants. Any study of the period between 1871 and 1914 must be made with an eye to 1914, and the massive, transformative war that year held.

3. Important Terms, People, and Events:

Terms

Balance of Power - · The European geopolitical system based on the assumption that nations are inherently expansionist, which maintained peace by pitting various camps or alliances of equal power against each other, thereby minimizing one nation's ability to conquer and disrupt the peace. The system originated after the defeat of Napoleon, continued throughout the nineteenth century in Europe and succeeded at promoting peace. The balance of power collapsed in 1914 under the pressure of the arms race, a shift in the criteria of power, and the mistaken expectation of a short war rather than the World War that seized Europe.

Scramble for Africa - · 1875-1912; the term used to describe Europe's rush to colonize and divide up the African continent in the latter part of the nineteenth century. This coincided with imperialism throughout Asia.

Three Emperors' League - · 1873; an alliance coordinated by German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck between the three most conservative powers in Europe--Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Russia. Each nation pledged to consult the others on matters of mutual interest and guaranteed that in case one went to war with a nation in western Europe, the other two would remain neutral. The league showed Bismarck's plan to eliminate the threat of a two-front war for Germany; also suggests the prevalence of the balance of power.

Labour Party - · A British political party that first gained prominence in 1892 with the election of its first representative to the House of Commons; represented the interests of British workers and called for the beginnings of socialist platform, and generally advocated the welfare state, government intervention in the economy, protection to workers, a short work day, et cetera.

Congress of Berlin - · 1878; the peace conference concluding the First Balkan Crisis, in which Russia supported the nationalist revolt of Bosnia-Herzegovina against the Ottoman Empire. Bosnia and Herzegovina were turned over to Austria-Hungary and Russia pledged to abandon its support of Serbia nationalism--all in the name of the balance of power.

Kulturkampf - · Literally, "struggle for civilization"; the name given to Germany's campaign against Catholics and the influence of Catholics in government in the name of loyalty to the German state; included barring priests from government office, restricting religious education, and instituting civil marriage. Eventually the policy caused such concern from the general population that the Catholic Center party gained a substantial showing in the Reichstag, forcing the government to back down from its repression.

Triple Alliance - · 1882; the alliance as it stood after Italy was asked to join; this maintained the

balance of power in Europe in the face of the Triple Entente.

Triple Entente - · 1907; informal alliance between France, Russia, and Great Britain; France and Russia had maintained an alliance since 1895. Great Britain joined in reaction to ominous developments on the Continent, especially the formation of the Triple Alliance.

Social Democratic Party - · By 1914, the largest single party in the German Reichstag; represented the left of the political spectrum, held a Marxist political and economic philosophy, and adapted to cooperation within the democratic system. Socialist democrats advocated a state socialist system--welfare state, union power, unemployment insurance, worker protection, et cetera--within the government. Unlike the violent revolutionaries, this party supported a gradual development from capitalism to socialism by making changes beneficial to the worker within the capitalist government.

Afrikaners - · The mostly Dutch descendant of whites who had settled in South Africa over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries before British imperialists came. Virulently racist, with strong notions of racial superiority, they came into conflict with the British when gold deposits were discovered in the Afrikaner province of Transvaal.

Treaty of Nanking - · 1842; the first of the "unequal treaties" between China and the European powers that gave the west important inroads and economic dominance in China's port cities and trade. An utter humiliation to the Chinese, the treaty forced the Chinese to pay huge indemnities to the British and grant large spheres of influence to its conquerors.

Spheres of influence - · Territories, ports, shipping lines, rivers, et cetera in which one nation held exclusive rights to profits and investment; granted to most European states by China after numerous military defeats throughout the second half of the nineteenth century.

Extraterritoriality - · The policy that foreigners were exempt from Chinese law enforcement and that, though on Chinese land, they could only be judged in China by officials of their own nation who generally looked the other way when profit was the goal; contributed to considerable indignation on the part of the Chinese.

People

James Kier Hardie - The first representative of the Labour Party in the British House of Parliament, elected in 1892, and the first real working-man to sit full time in the Commons.

Otto von Bismarck - Chancellor of the German Empire; a keen political operative who understood the geopolitics of modern Europe and worked to change the balance of power to Germany's favor; his main goal was to isolate his strongest enemy, i.e. France, from any other state on the Continent, thus his alliances with Austria-Hungary and Russia prior to 1895. A pragmatist above all else, he was known for his practice of realpolitik, or politics of self-interest.

Menelik II - Emperor of Ethiopia and a skillful politician; realized that his country could only defeat the European imperialists by playing them off one another, therefore, he made small concessions to each in return for weapons. These weapons kept pouring in as numerous nations feared increased influence on the part of their enemy. When Italy did invade Ethiopia to take control on 1 March 1896, Menelik II used all the modern weaponry he had obtained to defeat the Europeans.

Cecil Rhodes - British investor, politician, and imperial boss who envisioned a railroad connecting all British territory from Cairo, Egypt to Cape Town, South Africa. He was the major investor who, after the discovery of gold in Transvaal, brought the British in to mine the mineral, sparking conflict with the Afrikaner government. He orchestrated an overthrow of the government that failed and ruined his reputation.

addition, the liberals called on Bismarck's assistance for their anti-Papal campaign, a movement Bismarck was only too happy to lead. Known as the Kulturkampf, or "struggle for civilization", the anti-Church campaign aimed to eliminate Catholics who, Bismarck thought, could never maintain true loyalty to the state because of their higher loyalty to Rome. The legislation of the Kulturkampf removed priests from state service, restricted religious education, elevated civil marriage, and arrested and expelled defiant priests and bishops. Bismarck's attack on the Church was not altogether successful, since it inspired widespread concern over the social fabric of the new state, allowing the Catholic Center party to rally the Catholic vote and other supporters to oppose Bismarck's policies. After his catholic adversaries gained scores of seats in the Reichstag in 1878, Bismarck saw defeat and reached out to the new Pope, Leo XIII, to negotiate a settlement between Germany and the Church. The Kulturkampf ended and Catholic toleration became law.

Without the opposition of the Kulturkampf the Catholic party lost some of its steam, and the powerful Social Democratic Party emerged as Bismarck's key enemy. Led by Eduard Bernstein, the Social Democrats were Marxists who called for a gradual development of the capitalist system into a state socialist system. Among other things, the Social Democrats advocated working within the system to advance the needs of the workers through welfare legislation, trade union power, economic regulation, and nationalization or regulation of industry. Bismarck, recognizing the appeal to Germany's growing working classes, initiated a "carrot and stick" approach of simultaneous repression and an overt effort to acquire popular support. To repress (the stick), Bismarck passed the Anti-Socialist Law, expanding police powers and forbidding socialist meetings, fundraising, and the distribution of printed materials. Police could now arrest any suspected socialist under only a minimum of suspicion. To bring popular support to the state (the carrot), Bismarck pushed extensive social welfare legislation through the Reichstag. The state provided accident insurance, sickness benefits, old age pensions, disability payments, et cetera. However, these moderate reforms did nothing to undermine the growing popularity of the Marxist movement under the Social Democrats. By 1890, the year Kaiser Wilhelm II fired Bismarck, the Social Democrats controlled over twenty percent of the electorate and thirty-five seats in the Reichstag; by 1914, the Social Democrats were the largest single party in German politics.

To keep the Social Democrats in the minority, Wilhelm II required mass conservative support--from the traditional aristocracy to the middle classes and the agrarian poor. Wilhelm found that such a coalition could best be built and maintained through the manipulation of nationalist and militaristic sentiments in the name of an aggressive foreign policy that called for colonial expansion, military development, and espoused German superiority in Europe. Such a system characterized German politics through to the end of World War I.

Commentary

In 1871, Germany was a new nation; by 1890, Germany was arguably the strongest power on the Continent. Its military, though smaller than that of France or Russia, was the most modern, best equipped, and highly disciplined; its economy was the most vibrant due to its great success at industrialization and technological development; its national integrity was solid and unbreakable due to the importance Bismarck had always placed on loyalty and national improvement. If this was all true, what was Germany's problem? Put less colloquially, why was Germany itching to prosecute a dangerously aggressive foreign policy when its domestic situation was strong and its position in Europe was unrivaled? Let us consider a few possible answers.

As stated above, domestic political concerns could have driven Wilhelm II to pursue a necessarily aggressive foreign policy in order to gain the support of the agrarian poor and middle classes against the Social Democrats. This is entirely possible, though it seems unlikely that Germany would have gone to the lengths that it did--namely, World War I--for political reasons alone.

Let us look at this policy in its historical context. The nineteenth century had been one of great peace--no major conflicts like those of the Napoleonic Era. The conflicts that had developed were