
GERMAN IMPERIALISM IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

GERMAN *WELTPOLITIK*

German colonial policy, according to its proponents, formed an integral part of *Weltpolitik*.¹ The term came into wide usage during the 1890s and was closely linked to the striving for *Weltmacht*.² Both words are hard to translate. The term *Weltpolitik* passed into popular currency after Emperor Wilhelm II had used the phrase in his speech of January 18, 1896 in which he commemorated the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the German Reich. Previously *Weltpolitik*—in the sense of promoting colonial enterprise and foreign trade—might be said to have begun in 1884–1885, the years in which Bismarck had acquired a colonial empire in Africa. But under Bismarck, overseas policy had formed a mere episode. As the German chancellor had explained to Eugen Wolf, an explorer, much to the colonial enthusiasts' regret (on December 5, 1888): "Your map of Africa looks nice, but my map of Africa lies in Europe. Here is Russia, and here is France, and we are here at the very center; that is my map of Africa." Under Wilhelm II, however, especially after 1897, *Weltpolitik* achieved this same importance as *Europapolitik*—implying an ill-defined yearning for power and prestige on a global scale.

Germany, by this time, had undergone profound economic and social changes. Between 1870 and 1900, the population of the Reich had grown from forty-one to fifty-six million. Coal production had increased from thirty-four million to 149 million tons, and steel production from 0.3 million tons to 6.7 million tons. Germany had pioneered a host of new industries and had become the chief manufacturing country in Europe. The old Prussian simplicity—lovingly described by writers such as Theodore Fontane—had widely given way to a new spirit of national self-assertion. Admittedly, the extent of German chauvinism at the time can easily be exaggerated.

Wilhelminian Germany was not run solely by monocled Guards officers, boastful steel magnates, and obsequious professors—men ridiculed at the time in the pages of *Simplicissimus* and, later, by Allied propaganda in the First World War. But undoubtedly, there was a new spirit in the land, a spirit of over-confidence, the spirit of the *nouveau riche*. Once America had seemed *das Land der unbegrenzten Möglichkeiten*, the land of limitless opportunities—now Imperial Germany seemed to have appropriated this title for herself.

When the question is raised what really made up German *Weltpolitik* it is evident that its contents and its aims are rather vague. The generation of Wilhelm II had banished from its consciousness all the apprehensions which had haunted Bismarck with regard to Germany's position in the center of Europe, above all the fear of a future two-front war and of a Franco-Russian rapprochement. It was an optimistic and forward-looking generation. It was aware of its vitality, proud of the steep rise of the economy and of the quick work of political unification. The path to further success and progress looked smooth and easy. Public attention was irresistibly drawn from the cramped confines of Germany to the vast spaces overseas. There was the British empire anxiously trying to keep its possessions together, adding new strips of territory to its old dominions in order to be paramount in the world. There were the new ebullient powers like Japan and America eliminating their limitations and extending their frontiers. There were also France and Russia leaving Europe behind and reaching out into the spaces of Africa and Asia.

In view of this general tendency to play a part on the world's stage, the Germans felt justified in thinking that there were hardly any or no dangers at all to their central position in Europe. Ludwig Dehio put it in these terms: "Germany which up to that time was squeezed together uneasily now breathed more freely, its pulse beat more cheerfully." Explaining the same exuberant feeling of strength Lewis C. B. Seaman writes: "To the Germans, circumstances were a mere anvil and policy a series of irresistible hammer blows shaping the inevitable." And Fritz Hartung says there was no alternative to German policy but to transgress with vigor the lines drawn by Bismarck.⁴ In view of Germany's rapidly growing population, her demand for raw materials of all sorts, and her want of outlets for her economic products the country could not but respond to the challenge of imperialism and *Weltpolitik* lest she should be relegated to second or third place like Austria-Hungary and Spain.

The moral justification of the claim to *Weltpolitik*, which did not mean hegemony but equality with the other world powers, derived not only from Germany's most recent national development, but from modern European history in general. Thus it was widely held that *Weltpolitik* was, in fact, merely the transfer of the policy of the European balance of power to the world at large. Just as in the preceding centuries the balance of power

system had usually served the purpose of warding off the hegemony to which one of the European powers had aspired it was thought quite natural that Britain would have to share her supremacy in the world with others.

The most distinguished of the contemporary German historians (such as Max Lenz, Hans Delbrück, Herman Oncken, Erich Marcks, Friedrich Meinecke) propagated the view that the transfer of the European balance of power system on to a worldwide balance of power was an organic development of Rankean ideas and thoughts. They all believed in a concert of world powers evolving from the traditional concert of European powers in the process of which Britain's supremacy overseas was to be challenged among them by Germany.

Passing on to other contemporary leaders of public opinion, e.g., to the "liberal imperialists" such as Friedrich Naumann, Max Weber, and Paul Rohrbach whose ideas may be taken to represent a broad cross-section of political thinking of the time, one meets the same train of thoughts centering on the demand for a world power status for Germany. In his "National-Social Catechism" of 1897 Friedrich Naumann defined imperialism as the outgrowth of nationalism: "What is nationalism? It is the motive power of the German people to spread its influence all over the globe." Two years before, Max Weber, in his Freiburg inaugural address, had given expression to this widely held view when he said that Germany's unification was a juvenile prank which the nation had committed in its old days and which, because of its costliness, ought to have been omitted if it was to be the conclusion and not the starting-point of German world power politics.⁹

If the question is raised on what idea this widely felt striving for power was based it emerges that there was really no specific positive object behind it. The great negative object, though, was unmistakable: to drive Britain from her paramount position and to place in her stead a free system of equal world powers where Germany would occupy the position due to her. That *Weltpolitik* was an object in itself, however vague its contents might be, is seen in Naumann's phrase: "You must conquer something, anything in the world in order to be something."

Weltpolitik served no other purpose than the pursuit of power. Behind such an object there could be no great idea transporting other nations or pointing to the future. In order to understand the ideological poverty of German *Weltpolitik* one must think of the great struggles for hegemony of European history — of the sixteenth century, of the Reformation and Counter Reformation with their abundance of ideas, of the France of Louis XIV spreading French civilization all over the world, of the French Revolution with its lasting impact on the history of ideas. In view of this one is bound to see in Germany's quest for *Weltpolitik* — to quote Ludwig Dehio again — "a striking discrepancy between our vital energies and our spiritual ones."¹⁰ All the other great powers at the end of the nineteenth century were able to point to some specific goal they wanted to attain: France to Alsace-Lorraine,

Russia to Constantinople, Britain to the maintenance of her empire, Austria-Hungary to the destruction of Serbia; whereas Germany could nowhere and never be satisfied because it had no specific object to pursue.

If attention is focused on the diplomatic documents in order to view *Weltpolitik* not as an idea, but in action, the aimlessness abounds again. Those who promoted and practiced *Weltpolitik* may be charged with having misjudged the concomitant dangers and with having underrated the difficulties they incurred when submitting their demands; they may be charged with impatience in reaping the fruits of *Weltpolitik* before they were ripe. Yet, their supreme folly was that they did not pursue any vital object with their *Weltpolitik* which would have legitimized their demands. They wanted to meddle in everything without being able to explain why they did so. They pursued prestige for its own sake.

Thus, the explanation given in 1897 for the acquisition of Kiaochow was that Germany needed a coaling station for her navy—which at that time hardly existed, but which was then created, as A. J. P. Taylor put it, in order to protect the coaling station.¹¹ Bülow acknowledged in later years that Germany's appearance on the Chinese coast was directly linked to the first Navy Bill and was "a first practical step on the road of *Weltpolitik*."¹² The first Moroccan crisis of 1904–1905 was artificially created by Germany. Holstein at that time analyzed the German motives in the following way: "The task of a great power does not merely consist in protecting its territorial boundaries [Bismarck had regarded this as the main object of his foreign policy], but also in defending the just interests lying beyond those boundaries." "Just interests" according to him were those that were not confronted with another stronger right. Germany must protest against Morocco's annexation by France—not for any material reasons, but "in order to guard her prestige" and "protect her honour as a great power."¹³ The demand for an international conference was raised not in order to solve the Moroccan crisis, but to demonstrate Germany's power. When Germany's politicians finally found themselves in the impasse of Algeiras, Bülow regarded it of the utmost importance "that we should get out of this Moroccan blunder in such a way as will leave our prestige in the world intact."¹⁴ Almost the same game was reproduced during the second Moroccan crisis. Alfred von Kiderlen-Wächter, Secretary of State in the Foreign Ministry, told a friend of his in 1911 that it was necessary first of all "to bang our fist on the table."¹⁵

Judgment on Germany's *Weltpolitik* must be severe as it was an artificial product. Germany's map of the world, like Bismarck's map of Africa a few years before, was confined to Europe. Germany had no vital interests to defend outside Europe, against either Moroccan slave traders, Balkan sheep-stealers, Mesopotamian desert sheiks, Chinese opium growers, or Polynesian beauties. Her vital interests, political as well as economic, were centered in Europe. These involved security for a country wedged in by two hostile neighbors; they could not be jeopardized for a minimal share in the

Moroccan or Chinese market or in order to show the German flag everywhere between Agadir in Morocco and Apia on Samoa.

This harsh judgment on Germany's *Weltpolitik* must not be misconstrued in the sense that it was something amoral or bad in itself. The demand of a dynamic power to grow materially and to increase its political prestige is a normal wish. However, criticism must be leveled against the loud, frivolous, and reckless manner in which the demand for a share in the world's dominion was projected, against the absence of sound judgment of the dangers and difficulties lying on the path to world power, against the fact, in short, that Germany had overreached herself the moment she had entered the arena of *Weltpolitik*.

COLONIAL POLICY

A similarly negative judgment must be passed on Germany's colonial policy between 1884 and 1914. Colonial policy was, besides the navy program after 1898, the most visible expression of German *Weltpolitik*. It may be divided into two distinct phases. The first is the Bismarckian phase lasting from 1884 to 1890, but centering mainly on the years 1884-1885; the second is the Wilhelmian phase from 1890 to 1914.¹⁶

In 1884-1885 the geographical center of Germany's colonial activity lay in Africa. There all the major German colonies were acquired: Togo, Cameroon, German Southwest and German East Africa. Added to them were German New Guinea, Bismarck Archipelago, and the Solomon and Marshall Islands. In the next phase the center of activity gravitated to the Far East and to the Pacific. The following colonies were acquired in 1898 and 1899: Kiaochow from China; the Carolines, Marianas, and Palau Islands (all purchased from Spain after Germany had lost her war with the United States), and the western parts of Samoa through an exchange of territory with Britain. The newly acquired area amounted to little more than 0.1 percent of the colonies hitherto owned.

Nothing shows up more poignantly the aimlessness of German *Weltpolitik* than these simple figures. *Weltpolitik* was launched at a time when the overseas territories had already been carved up among the colonial powers except for the south polar region, the North African territories of Morocco and Tripoli, both of which were nominally still under Turkish suzerainty, and parts of Asia (mainly China).

The reason for Germany being able to "augment" her colonies by these far-flung territories in the Far East and in the Pacific in 1898-1899 was the favorable international situation very similar to the one which had enabled her acquisitions of 1884-1885. The temporary worsening of the Anglo-Russian antagonism in the Far East (Russian penetration of North China, acquisition of Port Arthur and the Anglo-French clash over Fashoda in the Sudan as well as Britain's predicament in South Africa and the Spanish-

American War) enabled the quick successive acquisition of the Pacific islands.

The motives for Bismarck's decision to acquire colonies have now been debated for exactly one century. There is general consensus that, as is usual with Bismarck's political actions, there is a host of reasons which made him act in 1884. There is no consensus, however, as to the order of priority to be given to the individual motives. The favorable international situation is obvious. Since the occupation of Merv by the Russians in February 1884 and their advance toward Afghanistan, Anglo-Russian relations reached the brink of war over India. In January 1885 the English public was stunned by the annihilation of Gordon Pasha's expedition by the Mahdi at Khartoum.

Oddly enough, no scholar has as yet investigated the German documents in order to find out the effects of Britain's occupation of Egypt in 1882 on Bismarck's policy. It may well be that there lies the key for his colonial acquisitions. At any rate, Britain's precarious position in Egypt was a wonderful lever at Bismarck's command in handling his relations with Britain. Thus, State Secretary Herbert von Bismarck referred to the "Egyptian apple of discord" as "a real Godsend for our foreign policy."¹⁷

It is similarly curious that historians have neglected a personal factor which was at various times of the highest importance in Bismarck's career and which deeply influenced his political actions: his uneasiness about the impending death of the old Emperor William; about the reorientation of Germany's domestic and foreign policy through his Anglophile successor Frederick III who, under the influence of his wife Victoria (daughter of Queen Victoria), and guided by his liberal entourage, would introduce liberal reforms in the interior and would lean toward England in his external relations. Given such a situation Bismarck's days would be quickly numbered."

Only Erich Eyck seems hitherto to have taken seriously Bismarck's fear of a future "Gladstone cabinet" in Berlin and connected this concern to Bismarck's bid for colonies in 1884-1885. According to this reasoning, Bismarck, in order to avert this personal and—in his eyes—national calamity, tried everything to create difficulties in Germany's relations with Britain so as to make a pro-British stance of Frederick impossible and pledge him to a pro-Russian one instead—the corner-stone of his foreign policy. German colonial initiatives in Africa were the best means of creating bad relations with Britain, even more so as they might be synchronized with France, Britain's traditional colonial enemy. Furthermore, they were also the most obvious means of discrediting the left Liberals (the Ludwig Bambergers and Eugen Richters), the staunchest supporters of Frederick's and the most outspoken anticolonial pressure group in Germany at a time when public opinion was rapidly swinging round in favor of German colonial ventures."

Nobody has as yet investigated the election campaign of the fall of 1884, waged by Bismarck with anti-liberal and pro-colonial slogans. Bismarck was

at least partly successful in the elections when the left Liberals dropped from 106 to sixty-seven seats in the Reichstag. He finally got out of this cleft stick when the Gladstone cabinet in London had to give way to a new Conservative one under Salisbury in June 1885 which meant a sudden improvement in Anglo-German relations and a prompt end of Bismarck's active meddling on the African scene.

There is, even without having recourse to the unpublished documents, quite a formidable array of evidence illustrating the close link between the domestic scene and the colonial one.²⁰

Bismarck's personal hatred of Gladstone — whom Bismarck's enemies, the Liberals, took as their model — is well known. In 1884–1885 he told everyone who wanted to hear it that Gladstone was the incarnation of political imbecility and incompetence, meaning that a German Gladstone would amount to the same.

As early as June 6, 1884, Holstein wrote in his diary that the chancellor, who up to now wanted to have nothing to do with colonial matters, was obviously using them as "a means of combating foreign influences." "No other questions [than the colonial one] is so liable to put the future *Kaiserin* with her Anglophile tendencies in a false position *vis-à-vis* the German nation."²¹ Again on September 19, he notes that Bismarck had told Czar Alexander that the only purpose of Germany's colonial policy was to drive a wedge between the crown prince and England. And to one of his ministers Bismarck had said: "All this colonial business is a fraud, but we need it for the elections."²²

When shortly after Bismarck's fall in March 1890, Ambassador Hans von Schweinitz asked Herbert von Bismarck to explain his father's colonial adventure of 1884–1885, the latter replied: "When we launched our colonial policy the Crown Prince was not yet ill and we had to be prepared for a long reign of his during which the English influence would be paramount. . . . In order to prevent this, the colonial policy had to be started which is popular and can at any time raise a conflict with England."²³ In November 1896, Emperor Wilhelm II told Oswald von Richthofen, director of the Colonial Department: "Bismarck conceived of our entire colonial policy only to drive a wedge between ourselves and England on account of the 'English influences.'²⁴

After the fall of the Gladstone cabinet Bismarck swung round the helm and now clearly subordinated his colonial policy to an improvement of Anglo-German relations. He regarded good relations with Britain and the staying in office of her Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary Lord Salisbury (Marquess Robert A. T. Gascoyne-Cecil) in office as "a hundred times more valuable . . . than the whole of East Africa" or than "twenty swampy colonies in Africa."²⁵ He regarded the plans of Karl Peters to build a big German colony in Central Africa as "criminal" and asked Salisbury to put a stop to Peters' doings, if need be by force of arms.²⁶

Other motives may have played a part in Bismarck's bid for colonies, e.g. the desire to create an outlet to German commerce overseas in view of the protectionist tendencies of the major industrial countries. If so, he became quickly disillusioned about their economic value, even more so because German commerce and capital showed very little inclination to become engaged in the colonies.²⁷

Shifting the available evidence, it appears that Bismarck's colonial adventure remained an episode because the danger of a German Gladstone cabinet soon vanished from the scene. The result of this episode was, nevertheless, that Germany was saddled with a colonial empire five times the size of the mother country.

In the second phase of German colonial policy a new motive came to play an ever-growing part, especially at the end of the 1890s: that is what has been termed social imperialism or colonial policy as a "factor of national integration." Colonial policy was to be treated as a grand national task diverting attention from social tension at home. Social imperialism, wrongly applied to Bismarck's colonial policy, became after 1897 a main element of *Sammlungspolitik*. Bismarck had quickly lost interest in colonial policy. Financially—where he never really had any illusions—Germany's colonies were clearly vast areas subsidized by the German taxpayer. Neither banks nor industry wanted to invest money in those barren countries unless heavily protected by the state. Again, Bismarck had never shared the enthusiasm of the colonialists who regarded colonies as a recipient of Germans wishing to emigrate. At the end of the eighties he wanted to get rid of the financially deficient overseas territories.

But although disillusionment about the economic and demographic aspects of the colonies spread in Germany they were now regarded as part and parcel of the prestige of an advancing imperialist power. It was incompatible with the spirit of the time, which thought and acted in categories of worldwide rivalry, to haul down a flag in foreign continents simply because it did not yield immediate and tangible results. A good expression of this nationalist spirit was the emperor's speech on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the German empire when he said that a new German world empire had grown from the German empire. Everywhere in faraway countries, he exclaimed, there are thousands of Germans; German goods, German science, and knowhow go abroad. It must be Germany's duty to attach this greater German empire to the mother country.²⁸

It has already been said above that *Weltpolitik*, inaugurated under such auspices, together with the domestic *Sammlungspolitik*, did not constitute a clear-cut goal conducive to unite the German nation socially. German colonial policy always lacked a grand imperial program. Until 1914 it remained a haphazard and improvised affair. Together with the hectic naval policy it constituted an insuperable stumbling-block to improved relations with Brit-

ain—a disastrous development leading to the outbreak of the First World War.

THE BALANCE

The historiography of German colonization has clearly profited from the process of decolonization which got under way during the 1950s. Up to that time, German colonial historiography had been one-sided in a political sense. Much of its inspiration had derived from a desire to refute the charge, made at Versailles in 1919, that Germans had shown themselves peculiarly unfit to govern backward peoples. Moreover, German scholars, like their colleagues in other European countries, had investigated colonialism almost solely from the standpoint of the metropolitan power. Since then the aspects of research have changed fundamentally. A spate of valuable books was published, both in East and in West Germany, that investigate the development of the German colonies in their own local and domestic settings.²⁹

German colonial policy on the spot may be divided into three clearly distinct phases. The first phase under Bismarck embraced the acquisition proper. Bismarck's concept to have the newly acquired colonies administered by chartered companies and to reduce the state's intervention to a minimum was a gross miscalculation. Private initiative did not come forward; those chartered companies that had come to life in Southwest and East Africa quickly went bankrupt; the state had to take over willy-nilly. The subsequent phase, lasting for about fifteen years, was the time when the colonies were conquered militarily and when a very small number of Germans settled in certain areas of the colonies. The end of this phase of "pacification" is marked by an all-out war against the Herero in German Southwest Africa. This war marks the transition to the third phase characterized by the appointment of the enlightened Bernhard Dernburg in 1906 as head of the German colonial administration, the so-called Hottentot elections of 1907 and the establishment of the Imperial Colonial Office (*Reichskolonialamt*) in the same year. Dernburg tried to convince his contemporaries that his entering office marked a new era in colonial administration after a period of utter chaos. He summed up his program in the following words: "Colonization . . . means utilization of the soil, of its resources . . . and above all of its inhabitants for the benefit of the economy of the colonizing nation, and the latter is pledged to repay [the indigenous population] with its higher civilization, its moral concepts, its better methods."³⁰

If a balance is struck on the three decades in which the German colonies existed its main results are these: the demographic predictions ventured by members of the colonial lobby were relentlessly belied year after year to an overriding degree. One should keep the following figures in mind: in an area of almost 2.6 million square kilometers, i.e. an area almost five times the

size of Germany, the population of Germans amounted to 5,495 in 1904. This figure corresponds to the number of inhabitants of a large German village. Half of them lived in German Southwest Africa. The total white population in the German colonies amounted to 8,000 in the same year, to over 15,000 in 1909, and to over 21,000 in 1911; i.e., the figure rose steadily, but compared to the rise of the German population and to the number of emigrants (in 1881 222,000, later on dropping sharply, between 1871 and 1901 about 2.75 million) the increase was infinitesimal in degree.³³ It is obvious that the colonies could never be the living space for the "nation without space" (*Volk ohne Raum*), as was propagated in the colonial literature, and that it would never become one in the future. The German authorities were realistic enough not only not to support, but to render emigration to the colonies systematically difficult.

The balance sheet from an economic and financial point of view yields quite similar results.³⁴ The colonies' share of Germany's foreign trade never surpassed the level of 0.5 percent during the last pre-war years. Germany's share of her colonies' overall trade diminished from an average of 35.2 percent in the decade between 1894 and 1903 to 26.6 percent in the subsequent decade. Of the foreign countries trading with the German colonies, Britain and her colonies were foremost. Thus, Zanzibar in 1903 controlled more than half of the total trade of German East Africa, whereas Germany's share was a mere quarter (in 1912, though, it rose to over 50 percent). On the Marianas and on Samoa foreign countries were in firm control of the islands' trade; only in her West African colonies was Germany economically paramount. In a word, the colonies were neither a market for German products nor a source for raw materials to any degree worth mentioning.

The colonies as an area for capital investment played no part whatsoever. Up to 1913 Germany had invested about 505 million marks in her colonies. This corresponds to the amount of money which German financial institutions invested in the South African gold mines in the 1890s.³⁵ Compared to the overall amount of German capital exported up to 1914 (twenty-five billion marks), the share of the German colonies does not surpass 2 percent.³⁶ German foreign capital went first of all to European countries and to the Near East. Little went overseas and less still to her own colonies—thus refuting all theories put forward at the time from Marxist quarters.

This means that from an economic and financial point of view the German colonial empire was an unprofitable affair. Except for Togo and Samoa no colony yielded a profit. For the administration of the other colonies the German taxpayer had to foot the bill. In the fiscal year 1912 the debt of the colonies had accrued to 171.48 million marks. For the years 1913 to 1917 a government grant of about twenty-nine million marks was earmarked annually. These figures do not include the indirect cost hidden in the government subsidies to the shipping lines, the maintenance of the naval forces, etc. Instead of being regarded, as in the eighteenth century, as milch cows giving

milk to the mother country, the colonies in the age of imperialism developed into costly objects of prestige.

The second phase of Germany's colonial history, 1890 to 1906, represented a time when social conditions radically changed: traditional systems of rule were questioned or destroyed by small groups of colonial administrators, officers, and settlers; German rule was firmly established everywhere. But among the subjected peoples resistance was not stifled. In East Africa the bloody Maji Maji rising of 1906 occurred and in Southwest Africa it led to the Herero war, the first war of Wilhelminian Germany. In the second and third phases the indigeous population in some colonies was decimated by compulsory labor assignments to the newly established plantations. This resulted in an acute labor shortage which most of the white settlers, whose thoughts moved in a Social Darwinist framework, were unable or unwilling to solve. The attempt to deal with this most acute problem began when the Imperial Colonial Office, with Dernburg at its head, was established in 1907, although on the local level there were a few governors (like Theodor Leutwein in German Southwest Africa) who had recognized the dangers and tried to prevent them. The attempt, aimed at protecting the plantation laborers, had no great prospects of success because at home parliament was always loath to spend money for the colonial budget and because in the colonies the settlers and colonists in their short-sighted egoism tried to counteract them.

In the third phase the new social stratification, which has recently been investigated by various historians, was fully developed. On the one hand there was the very small group of white masters; on the other the large group of the uprooted, badly paid and maltreated black subjects; astride the fence was the colonial government trying to adjust the conflicting interests of the two groups and acting according to Dernburg's maxim quoted above. This social interrelationship remained tense until the end of German colonization. In German Southwest Africa it worsened irremediably, contrary to the views formerly held, since not only did the local government and the settlers have conflicting views on the treatment of the blacks whom they needed for their own survival, but the settlers were at loggerheads even among themselves.

The various dark spots of German colonial rule have by no means become brighter through closer scrutiny in recent research. But time and distance also allow of a better assessment of the positive aspects of German colonialism. Whereas the German colonies' contribution to the economy of the mother country was negligible, the impact of Germany on the economic development of her colonies was significant. European colonialism in general transformed the overseas territories—those in Africa especially—in a radical and revolutionary way. As the young Karl Marx had already pointed out, British rule in India set in motion the greatest social upheaval on the Asia continent. And Friedrich Engels had warned of idealizing pre-colonial

raiding economics and that "after all the modern *bourgeois*, with civilization, industry and order . . . is preferable to the feudal lord or to the marauding robber."¹⁶ As to the German colonies, the judgment passed by Lewis H. Gann and Peter Duignan seems to be just and well-balanced: "Within less than one generation the Germans accomplished a great deal. . . . They introduced modern methods of scientific research; they helped to pioneer the study of African linguistics, ethnography, and related sciences. They built harbors and roads; they set up new industries; they created railway systems. . . . Within thirty years the German colonies moved from the Iron Age into the era of steam power and the internal-combustion engine."¹⁶ According to another view German colonial rule not only led to political enslavement, but also to spiritual emancipation.¹⁷ In this sense an African scholar could write that colonialism was "the most important liberating factor the African mind has experienced in historical times."¹⁸

NOTES

1. For a more detailed account see my book *Deutschland im Zeitalter des Imperialismus, 1890-1914: Grundkräfte, Thesen und Strukturen*, 4th ed. (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1982), pp. 20-113.

2. A solid general background of the ideas of the time is provided by Heinz Gollwitzer, *Geschichte des weltpolitischen Denkens. Vol. 2: Zeitalter des Imperialismus und der Weltkriege* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982).

3. Otto Fürst von Bismarck, *Die Gesammelten Werke* (Berlin: Otto Stollberg, 1926), vol. VIII, p. 646.

4. Ludwig Dehio, *Deutschland und die Weltpolitik im 20. Jahrhundert* (Vienna: Verlag für Geschichte und Politik, 1955), p. 41.

5. Lewis C. B. Seaman, *From Vienna to Versailles* (London: Methuen, 1955), p. 144.

6. Fritz Hartung, *Deutsche Geschichte, 1871-1919*, 4th ed. (Leipzig: Koehler & Ameland, 1939), p. 148.

7. Friedrich Naumann, *Werke* (Cologne: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1964), vol. V, p. 201.

8. Max Weber, *Gesammelte Politische Schriften* (Munich: Drei Masken Verlag, 1921), p. 29.

9. Quoted by R. Nürnberger, "Imperialismus, Sozialismus und Christentum bei Friedrich Naumann," *Historische Zeitschrift* 170 (1950): 530.

10. Dehio, *Deutschland und die Weltpolitik*, p. 104.

11. Alan J. P. Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe, 1848-1918* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 375.

12. Quoted by Johannes Ziekursch, *Politische Geschichte des neuen deutschen Kaiserreiches* (Frankfurt/M: Frankfurter Societäts-Druckerei, 1930), vol. III, p. 117.

13. *Die Große Politik der Europäischen Kabinette 1871-1914: Sammlung der Diplomatischen Akten des Auswärtigen Amtes*, by Johannes Lepsius, Albrecht Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Friedrich Thimme, eds. (Berlin: Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft, 1925), vol. XX, pt. 1, p. 208.

14. Ibid, pt. 2, p. 563.
15. Oskar Freiherr von der Lancken Wakenitz, *Meine dreißig Dienstjahre 1888-1918: Potsdam Paris Brüssel* (Berlin: Verlag für Kulturpolitik, 1931), p. 96.
16. The centenary of the foundation of the German colonies has produced a spate of new books. The more important ones are: Hans Georg Steltzer, *Die Deutschen und ihr Kolonialreich* (Frankfurt/M: Societäts-Verlag, 1984); Francesca Schinzinger, *Die Kolonien und das Deutsche Reich: Die wirtschaftliche Bedeutung der deutschen Besitzungen in Übersee* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1984); Horst Gründer, *Geschichte der deutschen Kolonien* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1985).
17. *Staatssekretär Graf Herbert von Bismarck. Aus seiner politischen Privatkorrespondenz*, Walter Bußmann, ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1964), p. 259.
18. See, for a different episode, but with much the same background: W. Baumgart, "Prolog zur Krieg-in-Sicht-Krise: Bismarcks Versuch, den Kulturkampf in die Türkei zu exportieren (1873/74)," *Historische Zeitschrift* 236 (1983): 297-325.
19. Erich Eyck, *Bismarck* (Erlenbach-Zürich: Eugen Rentsch, 1944), vol. III, pp. 400-401.
20. See, for a somewhat different order of ideas: H. Pogge von Strandmann, "Domestic Origins of Germany's Colonial Expansion under Bismarck," *Past & Present* 42 (1969): 140-59.
21. *The Holstein Papers: The Memoirs, Diaries and Correspondence of Friedrich von Holstein, 1837-1909*, by Norman Rich and M. H. Fisher, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), vol. II, p. 155.
22. Ibid., p. 161.
23. *Briefwechsel des Botschafters General v. Schweinitz*, Wilhelm von Schweinitz, ed. (Berlin: Reimar Hobbin, 1928), p. 193. See for a similar remark by H. v. Bismarck: Bernhard Fürst von Bülow, *Denkwürdigkeiten* (Berlin: Ullstein, 1930), vol. I, p. 429.
24. *The Holstein Papers* (1961), vol. III, p. 655.
25. *Die Große Politik der Europäischen Kabinette*, vol. IV, p. 176 (footnote).
26. Quotes from unpublished documents by Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Bismarck und der Imperialismus* (Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1969), pp. 365-66.
27. See also Winfried Baumgart, *Imperialism: The Idea and Reality of British and French Colonial Expansion, 1880-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 140-55.
28. *Die Reden Kaiser Wilhelms II. in den Jahren 1896-1900*, Johannes Penzler, ed. (Leipzig: Philipp Reclam, 1904), vol. II, p. 9.
29. See W. Baumgart, "Die deutsche Kolonialherrschaft In Afrika: Neue Wege der Forschung," *Vierteljahrsschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 58 (1971): 468-81; J. Dülffer, "Deutsche Kolonialherrschaft in Afrika," *Neue politische Literatur* 26 (1981): 458-73.
30. Bernhard Dernburg, *Zielpunkte des deutschen Kolonialwesens* (Berlin: Mittler, 1907), p. 5.
31. Compiled from vols. of Meyers *Grosses Konversationslexikon* (Leipzig and Vienna: Bibliographisches Institut, 1906-13).
32. The most up-to-date account is the book by F. Schinzinger mentioned above in footnote 16. See also Gann and Duignan, *The Rulers of German Africa*, pp.

257-261; Lewis H. Gann, "Economic Development in Germany's African Empire, 1884-1914," *Colonialism in Africa, 1870-1960*, vol. IV, pp. 213-55.

33. William O. Henderson, *Studies in German Colonial History* (London: F. Cass, 1962), p. 58.

34. Peter Hampe, *Die "ökonomische Imperialismustheorie". Kritische Untersuchungen* (München: C. H. Beck, 1976), pp. 180-82.

35. Quoted by Gann and Duignan, *The Rulers of German Africa*, p. 243.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 244, 246.

37. Rupert Emerson, "Colonialism," *Journal of Contemporary History* 4 (1969): 3-16.

38. Ali A. Mazrui, "Borrowed Theory and Original Practice," *African Politics, Patterns of African Development: Five Comparisons*, by Herbert J. Spiro, ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1967), p. 92. Twenty years later, however, in a series of nine telecasts entitled *The Africans*, Mazrui blames imperialism for most of Africa's current ills (editor's note).