

World Climate During the 1800's

The political atmosphere was very tough and based in reality – called realpolitik. In 1861, Cavour led Italy into independence. In 1871, Germany became an independent country led by Bismarck. In America during this time period, westward expansion was taking place (we had already purchased the Louisiana Purchase from France) and the Civil War was being fought.

Imperialism Notes

Imperialism is the conquering and ruling of other lands. Imperialism greatly increased during the late 1800's – why?

Economic Climate of the World

World trade grew by leaps and bounds after the Industrial Revolution because:

- Transportation between countries became easier: railroads were built and steamships made sea travel easy plus they were large enough to carry trading items
- Communication between countries improved: the telegraph made communications between businesses in different countries much easier and faster
- Businesses began to grow larger: corporations were formed which allowed businesses to have a lot more money to operate with
- Industry and business overtook farming as the key source of jobs for the public

Not All Changes Were Positive: with all of these changes came some negatives

- Most factory and industry workers worked in horrible conditions (long hours, low pay, dangerous conditions)
- The business owners became very rich while the average worker remained poor – there was a huge gap between the rich and the poor

Changes in Workers' Attitudes

As a result of the gap between the rich and the poor, the working class began to demand more equality. Karl Marx wrote The Communist Manifesto which outlined a new system called socialism which was supposed to equalize wealth within society. Socialists believed that all goods and services should be equally divided amongst the people – this way there was no rich and poor – everyone was equal.

Business Owners' Response to Socialism

Most business owners disagreed with the ideas of socialism and began to look for new sources of labor and new markets in which to sell their goods. This began the mass movement toward Imperialism.

Imperialism

Until the late 1800's, Britain had always led the world in trade. With the Industrial Revolution, other countries began to catch up to Britain. Everyone began to believe that the key to economic domination was to have colonies. Several reasons led to this thinking:

1. Colonies provided new workers
2. Colonies provided new people to buy your goods/services
3. Europeans believed it was the "white man's burden" to go out and "civilize non-Europeans"

So where did Imperialism take place? Africa, Asia and Latin America

Imperialism in Africa

European countries divided Africa into colonies. Africans were used to work in the mines mining gold, silver and diamonds. Africans were forced to buy European goods and to pay large taxes to the Europeans. South Africa particularly supplied the Europeans with many diamonds that they could trade around the world.

Imperialism in South Asia (India)

India was very important to Europe because it possessed many natural resources. The British East India Company set up posts in India to gain natural resources and to sell their products. The Company became so powerful that they had their own army to protect their products (these Indian soldiers were called sepoys). Eventually Britain began controlling India and taking its resources while heavily taxing all Indian citizens.

Imperialism in China

China was not interested in trade with the outside world because they were totally self-sufficient – they did not need to trade. British merchants began secretly trading opium with Chinese merchants. The Chinese government begged the Queen to stop this trade but she refused – this resulted in the Opium War. Britain easily defeated China and forced them to sign the Treaty of Nanking. This treaty forced China to open up and trade with Britain.

Imperialism in Japan

Japan had also remained closed to trade with the outside world because they were self-sufficient. In 1853, Matthew Perry (an American) sailed to Japan. The Japanese saw the American ships and weapons and agreed to a treaty which opened Japan to trade with America. The Meiji (ruling family of Japan) took advantage of this situation and traded for goods that would industrialize and modernize Japan.

Imperialism in Latin America

The United States focused their imperialistic efforts on Latin America. They built factories there and used laborers. They also sold US goods there – however, they never took colonies. The US built the Panama Canal to make trade easier. Later, the US began to focus their attention on the Pacific Islands as colonies.