?By 1914 Imperial Germany Was In A State Of Crisis.To What Extent Do You Agree With This Statement? Essay, Research Paper

Introduction: –

On the eve of WWI, what sort of state was Germany in? –

Emerging pressure from the SPD, increased influence ? largest

party in Reichstag. Stability of empire threatened –

Government had financial problems ? not enough income.? Increased naval expenditure worsened

problem. –

No powerful leadership ? succession of PM?s after Bismarck not

successful, each sacked after short period.?

People dissatisfied and socialist support grew. –

Problems were so deep-rooted ? right wing conservatives 2

solutions ?either a coup by the Kaiser or a victorious war.? Middle part: –

After Kaiser William accepted Bismarck?s resignation in 1890,

Germany lost its great leader, Kaiser tried to replace him with a series of

PM?s each had his own solution to Germany?s problems. –

Problems – What were Germany?s longstanding problems? –

Under Bismarck ? socialism, Catholicism, military expansion,

tariffs and government funding. –

No new problems in Germany ? 1890-1914 see a worsening of

existing problems already apparent under Bismarck. –

Socialism ? Bismarck had failed in his dealings with the

increase of socialism within Germany, all of his policies had failed and his

predecessors encountered similar problems. –

Caprivi ? Pursued progressive socialist legislation to

decrease socialist influence in the Reichstag ? reduced tariffs on goods coming

into country ? reduced cost of living ? socialist support continued to

increase.? Caprivi dismissed over

failure to bring in fresh anti-socialist legislation. –

Caprivi was equally unsuccessful in dealing with the socialist

problem and Bismarck had been. Both saw socialism as a threat and a

revolutionary force, possible solution? Integration into govt. at this

point.? Conservative monarchy reluctant

to give up power. (?Compromise?is stronger than the revolution scheme? Eduard

Bernstein SPD leader 1899.) showing willingness of less extreme socialists to

compromise. –

Hohenlohe ? tried to win support of middle classes and

suppress ?revolutionary socialist threat?. Navy program ? hoped to decrease

influence of socialism by non-violent means ? would provide secure jobs for

many socialist workers, hence build govt. support ? Hohenlohe too cautious and

sacked in 1900. –

Bernard von BÜlow ? popular with conservatives as reintroduced

higher tariffs ? further increased socialist forces as price of living

rose.? Sacked over failure to support

Kaiser on comments made to the British press. –

Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg ? little to combat growing

socialism ? 1912 largest party in the Reichstag ? stability of empire

threatened. –

The accumulation of the socialist problem was important to

state of empire in 1914.? By 1914

socialism had grown into as powerful force that threatened the authority of the

Kaiser, a solution must be found.? This

was the view held by the conservatives, the Kaiser and his advisors.? However, socialism by no means a united

force ? disagreement e.g. –

Extremists ? revolution (?I want to remain the deadly enemy of

the bourgeois society and ? to eliminate in entirely!? August Bebel SPD leader

1903.) –

Revisionists ? legitimate inclusion into govt. (?compromise?is

stronger than the revolution scheme? Eduard Bernstein SPD leader 1899.) –

Disagreements meant Kaiser overestimated ability of socialists

to whip up support. –

Was this situation critical? Probably not ? had the

conservatives given limited power to the SPD likelihood is problem would have

disappeared ? advice to Kaiser (?either a coup by the Kaiser or a victorious

war.?) too drastic. –

Other problems: –

Government funding ? true funding had been scarce even in

Bismarck?s era, hence tariff laws ? situation worsened by naval spending under

Hohenlohe, BÜlow, and Bethmann-Hollweg and loss of tariff income under Caprivi and

Hohenlohe.? Policies were feasible

provided direct taxation was introduced.??

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Solution was direct taxation ? problem realised but not solved

between 1890-1914.? Added to crisis! –

Naval spending ? policy introduced supposedly to ?stimulate

trade and industry? push stock market prices up, save many assets and bring

about a consolidation of the economy.? (Prince Otto zu Salm, President of the

navy league, 1901) The real motives are questionable ? the building of the navy

achieved little except an increase in govt. expenditure.? Motivation perhaps a multiplicity of

interests ? ?It would be very interesting to learn the connections which exist

between the fleet fanatics and the manufacturers of the fleet. Conclusion: –

The state of crisis was induced by the lack of ability among

those in charge of the country to make important difficult decisions. –

Problems were: –

Kaiser intent to holding onto power, unwilling to give any up –

Overestimation of SPD strength. –

Reality that conservatives still held control and moderate

reform could have sorted the problems. –

Govt. funding could have been increased by direct taxation or

debt avoided by not reducing tariffs or reducing naval spending. –

The govt. wasted money on naval problem ? filled own pockets –

So to what extent was Germany in a state of crisis by 1914,

certainly a crisis did exist, however, only to the extent that something needed

to be done ? the conservative view that only a coup or a successful war could

have averted the crisis is unfounded. –

Had the govt. introduced direct taxation, reduced naval

spending, and given the SPD a greater say in the govt. of the country by

negotiation, WWI, which ultimately resulted from this crisis, may have been

averted.