

Bruce Waller, *Bismarck at the Crossroads: The Reorientation of German Foreign Policy after the Congress of Berlin 1878-1880*, The Athlone Press, University of London, London, 1974, pp. 273.

Recent historiography has effectively shattered Bismarck's traditional image as a giant figure who forged an empire single-handedly and who became the arbiter of Europe — all accomplished according to a master plan predicated on well defined principles. Bruce Waller's excellent study does not change materially Bismarck's «revised» image, but reaffirms the «revisionist» approach, at least insofar as his foreign policy is concerned, and deepens our knowledge of a very crucial period of Bismarck's foreign policy and diplomacy. The book covers thoroughly the period from the Congress of Berlin in mid-June 1878, to the beginning of 1880 — a period characterized by Bismarck's departure from his traditional policy of freedom from binding commitments. The Austro-German alliance of 1879, marks the beginning of a period of entangled relationships contracted in the 1880's which proved difficult to be controlled by their creator and impossible to be regulated by his less worthy epigoni.

The dominant theme of this book is the Russo-German tension, climaxed in 1879, which is discussed thoroughly in its multifarious manifestations, and forms the background of and provides the primary motive, according to the author, for the Austro-German alliance of 1879. After a comprehensive introduction dealing with the newly developing domestic and external exigencies and their ramifications, the author concentrates in the months immediately following the Congress of Berlin — a period noted for its confusion and complexity emanating from the eastern crisis. During these months Bismarck endeavored to support both Austria and Russia, while at the same time he was desirous of maintaining good relations with all great powers. However, the attempt to play the double role of the «honest broker» and concurrently satisfy the desires and needs of both Russia and Austria, in order to strike a kind of a precarious balance calculated to keep alive the *Dreikaiserbund* proved to be impossible. Moreover, Bismarck was not particularly inclined to foster an Austro-Russian rapprochement which might escape his control. He was also reluctant to strengthen the *Dreikaiserbund*, at the expense of England's friendship. As the author points out «any marked improvement in friendship with Russia would have to be purchased with a deterioration of relations with her rivals» (p. 23). It was especially within the commissions entrusted with the regulation of the various questions in the Balkans emanating from the eastern crisis that the differences among the great powers came to the surface. Would it be possible for Bismarck to keep Europe in a state of «balanced tensions» that would serve all his purposes? Hardly. By the end of 1878, he was compelled by circumstances to withdraw into the background, allowing the Three Emperors' League to collapse.

While Bismarck assumed a rather passive attitude in the renewed eastern crisis toward the end of 1878, his Russian and Rumanian policies affected profoundly the international situation. The more important of the two problems, i.e. Russo-German relations, involved a struggle for European hegemony manifested in the «two chancellors' war» — a bitter conflict between Bismarck and Prince Gorchakov. Each man was determined to discredit the other, but the offensive was initiated by Bismarck. The «two chancellors' war» is the *leit-motiv* of the entire study, and, indeed, it frequently looms larger than life. To be sure, the author explains that this struggle for diplomatic supremacy «was much more a political than a personal struggle, but the personal side added a note of bitterness and intensity

which made it more difficult for either to give in, thus forcing both to go further than intended» (p. 54). Still, this reader was left with the impression of an exaggerated personal dimension which at times tends to overshadow the impersonal and more substantive forces at work. Russo-German relations at this time were mainly conditioned by three basic factors: Russia's disappointment with the outcome of the Congress of Berlin, Germany's adoption of a protectionist policy through a general tariff bill which was detrimental to Russia, and Germany's restrictive sanitation measures against an outbreak of plague in south Russia. Clearly, Bismarck's methods in his handling of questions related to Russia at this time brought no credit to his diplomacy. In the end, and following the conclusion of the Austro-German alliance, he did succeed in forcing Russia to come to terms in a renewed *Dreikaiserbund*. But it was at best a Pyrrhic victory, for his policy at this crucial time changed profoundly the character of Russo-German relations.

The second problem, which illuminates another dimension of the impersonal forces which increasingly conditioned Germany's policy, was Bismarck's Rumanian policy — a policy clearly determined by domestic considerations. This was «the first determined effort of the German Government», writes the author, «to give political support to German capital in other countries, it is an important symptom of the chancellor's renunciation of economic liberalism and perhaps the largest of the initial, unwitting steps on the road to imperialism» (p. 54). Specifically, it involved the greatest part of the Rumanian railway system which was owned by a company controlled by the bankers Hansemann and Bleichroeder, the latter having established a very close relationship with Bismarck. As the author cautiously points out, «it is difficult to determine the extent of Bleichroeder's personal influence on the formation of German policy on Rumania, and, therefore, indirectly on German relations with other countries» (p. 55). There is no doubt, however, that he did exert considerable influence and not infrequently his pressure precipitated governmental action. In this case Bismarck predicated Rumania's recognition on a settlement of the railway question favorable to German interests. In order to secure western support for his scheme he pushed the Jewish question in the forefront, for the Congress of Berlin had made Rumania's recognition dependent upon the emancipation of the Rumanian Jews. This example illustrates the intense interplay between domestic considerations and foreign policy. In the end, his tactics in dealing with the Rumanian question strained his relations with Russia as well as with the western powers.

Bismarck's posture vis-à-vis the eastern crisis illuminates certain crucial aspects of the general principles of his foreign policy hitherto shrouded in the Bismarckian legend. At the core of the Bismarckian myth stands the widely accepted view that after 1871 the German empire was satiated and that Bismarck's policy was henceforth predicated upon the preservation of peace. Giving priority to peace over war when the former corresponds to what a ruling elite considers as the vital interests of the status quo is not tantamount to accepting peace as a permanent desideratum. In power politics in general and in the case of Bismarck in particular, neither peace nor war can ever be viewed as ends but merely as means for the greater security and power of the existing social structure internally and Germany's preponderance externally. The German empire was satiated in the sense that Bismarck was opposed to further territorial expansion, but as this study clearly shows Bismarck's policy was essentially expansive. As the author points out, «unless we remember the desire to become the indispensable centre of things his foreign policy must remain inexplicable» (p. 252). Would he always be able then to control the «balance of tensions» that underlie his foreign policy? A lasting peace in the Near East, for instance, was hardly

a desideratum. For Bismarck, «... it would be a triumph of German statecraft if the eastern sore could be kept open to frustrate the unity of the great powers, and assure her own peace» (p. 44). What is astonishing is not that it has taken the historians' craft so long to unravel at least part of the Bismarck puzzle, but that the hitherto accepted views were incongruous with the essence of *Realpolitik* as manipulated by its master practitioner.

While his study is very illuminating and contributes immensely to the demythologization of the Iron Chancellor, it seems to me that Professor Waller has not succeeded in freeing himself entirely from Bismarck's spell. This is reflected in his approach to two fundamental problems, i.e. the role of the state as an organic entity in Bismarck's conceptualization of foreign policy, and the interplay between domestic and foreign policy. He espouses the idea that Bismarck was the practitioner of *Staatsräson*; that his policy «was guided by the welfare of the state, rather than that of the nation or even the monarchy» (p. 67). By implication, Bismarck embraces, not only in theory but in *praxis*, the Hegelian notion of the organic state as an entity which transcends civil society, a state which is abstracted from the social and historical forces that condition it. Of course within the context of German idealism which shaped the German historical craft, Ranke's notion of the *Primat der Außenpolitik* makes sense. The author does agree that domestic considerations «influenced diplomacy as well as foreign policy in the wider context, but not so much that one can aptly speak of the primacy of domestic policy...» (p. 256). Instead, he does attribute a preponderant role to foreign policy inasmuch as it was Bismarck's primary concern.

It is not my aim here to become involved in the perennial methodological controversy about the primacy of either domestic or foreign affairs. Some observations, however, related to the problem would not be inappropriate. It seems to me that a more intense interplay between domestic and foreign policy emerges from this study than the author is disposed to concede in his broader generalizations. This becomes particularly evident in his discussion of empirical reality and in his handling of specific circumstances. Even the *Primat der Innenpolitik* is at times incontrovertible as shown by the exposition of Bismarck's Rumanian policy and the German tariff bill. Bleichroeder's close relationship with Bismarck, his influence on the railway question, and his position vis-à-vis protectionism, a policy that was bound to have a more pervasive influence on foreign policy than the isolated Rumanian question, is another case in point. Nor can we dismiss as readily as the author does, the possibility of economic considerations in the decision for an Austro-German alliance. Many explanations are offered for Bismarck's fateful decision, the Russo-German tension receiving the greatest weight, but in the end the author feels that «Bismarck's motives for seeking the alliance remain unclear», and that «a definite answer to the riddle may never be found» (p. 194). This may very well be the case; and if it is so, then one should be all the more reluctant to dismiss the motive of economic expansionism offered by Helmut Böhme (*Deutschlands Weg zur Großmacht*). As some critics have pointed out it may be that the younger enthusiasts of the *Primat der Innenpolitik*, such as Böhme and Hans-Ulrich Wehler (*Bismarck und der Imperialismus*), might have overstated their case in maintaining that Bismarck's foreign policy always functioned under the sway of domestic policy. Notwithstanding their possible overstatement, the importance of their work is in no way attenuated. They have opened new paths which make a traditional interpretation of imperial Germany obsolescent.

Böhme sees the Austro-German alliance as a means to bind the two countries together by commercial ties which would have opened the entire central European region to German economic expansion and domination. This is in keeping with Böhme's explanation of the

reconstruction of the mainstays of the German socioeconomic order in the late 1870's in the wake of the Great Depression which converted the agrarian interests to protectionism and led to the agrarian-industrial combination that lasted until the collapse of the Reich. It is this combination, of course, which explains the new tariff policy. While commercial considerations might not have been Bismarck's foremost immediate motive for the alliance, they cannot be dismissed as long term expansionist goals. To be sure, the author does not disregard completely the new internal socioeconomic configurations, but he minimizes the importance of the economic factor in Bismarck's foreign policy. I find this position as much unconvincing as Professor Waller finds Böhme's arguments. Admittedly, these problems cannot be resolved easily, and the debate is bound to continue unabated.

In spite of points of disagreement on general interpretative issues, this is a very good study of the period and a welcome contribution to our overall understanding of Bismarck's policy. The Bismarck that emerges from this study is hardly the master chess player, hardly the man who was always in control of his policy. Certainly in his short term responses to circumstances he was more successful than any of his contemporaries, but the test of foreign policy is its long term consequences. Professor Waller's study has effectively denuded the Iron Chancellor of his formidable panoply.

*Memphis State University*

GEORGE B. LEON

George Lenczowski, *Soviet Advances in the Middle East*, Washington, D. C., American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1972, 176 pages, \$ 4.00 (Paper).

George Lenczowski's volume is one of a series undertaken by the American Enterprise Institute in an examination of issues raised by the deterioration of the position of the United States in the Middle East. Indeed, Professor Lenczowski (University of California, Berkeley) has served as the director of the general project, which has included Howard Ellis' *Private Enterprise and Socialism in the Middle East* (1970), Lee Preston's *Trade Patterns in the Middle East* (1970), Harry B. Ellis' *The Dilemma of Israel* (1970), Richard H. Pfaff's *Jerusalem: Keystone of an Arab-Israeli Settlement* (1969), Ralph H. Magnus' *Documents on the Middle East* (1969), George Lenczowski's *United States Interests in the Middle East* (1968), and Majid Khadduri's *Major Middle Eastern Problems in International Law* (1972).

These are all highly useful volumes, prepared by well-known scholars and writers. The new contribution to the series is no exception. To the contrary, it is a well-grounded study of a very important phenomenon on the Middle Eastern scene—one which requires examination from many angles of approach, including the angle of the American interest in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East. The work begins with a consideration of doctrinal foundations—a study of ideological elements which have entered into the development of Soviet policy and interest in the Middle East—in which the contributions of Lenin and Stalin are elaborated and the developments in the post-Khrushchev period. Professor Lenczowski then proceeds to examine the evolution of Soviet policy on a country-by-country basis in the post-World War II period from 1945 down to date, beginning with Iran and Turkey—along the so-called Northern Tier of the Middle East. After that he goes into the Arab World, centering on Egypt, Syria and Iraq. He closes with a discussion of Soviet arms and the military presence. Appendices include the Soviet-