OTTOMAN TURKEY

As war in Europe approached, the once-proud Ottoman empire was crumbling. The Turks looked to Germany to help them shore up their failing nation.



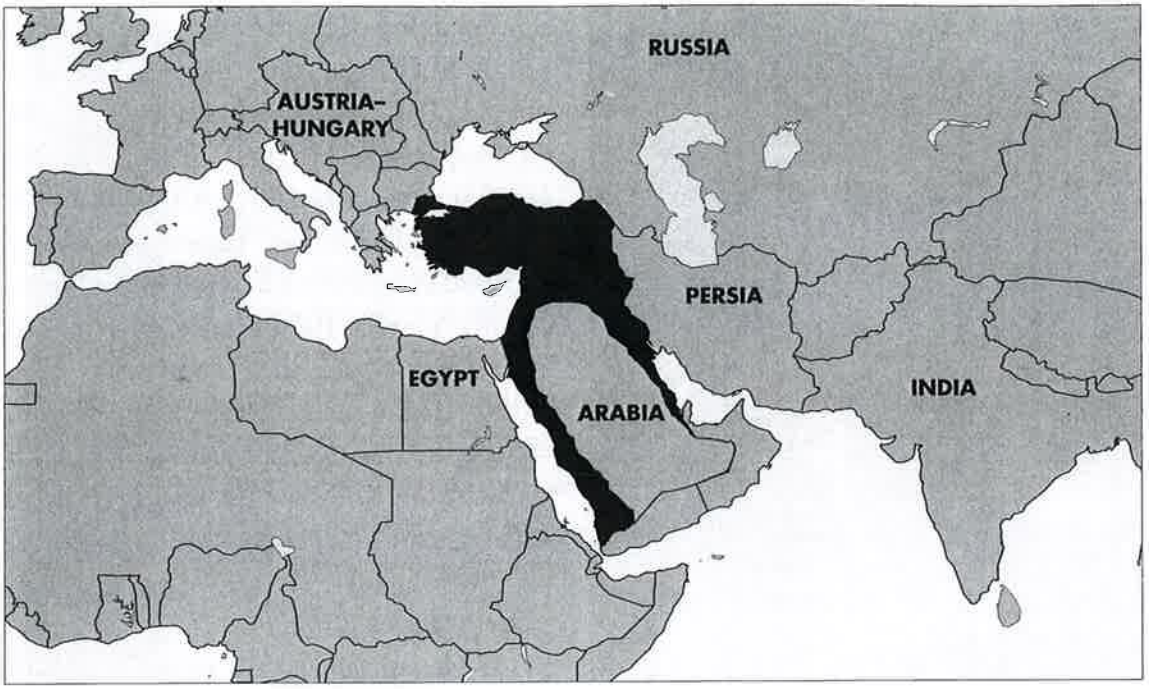
toman capital ntinople, today as Istanbul, the narrow orus strait linking ck Sea to the rranean. The ient domes of a e underline the ance of the religion.

GEOGRAPHY	Centered on modern Turkey, but stretching along the Mediterranean, Persian Gulf, and Red Sea, including Palestine, Mesopotamia, and parts of North Africa
POPULATION	36,000,000 in all territories (1906)
RULER	Sultan Mohammed V (ruled 1909 to 1918)
CAPITAL	Constantinople (now renamed Istanbul)
ALLIANCES	Close relationship with Germany

The Muslim Ottoman Empire ruled over a vast area from what is now Turkey. It held a key geographical position. Its vast territory straddled three continents – Europe, Africa, and Asia – and had once included the Balkan peninsula, the southern shore of the Mediterranean, Mesopotamia, and Syria. It guarded the entrance from the Mediterranean to the Black Sea, Russia's vital

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A glance at the n makes Turkey's ke strategic position apparent. It guar Russia's Black Se to the Mediterran

trading route with the west. In the 17th century the Ottomans had twice laid siege to Europe's greatest capital, Vienna. But the empire was weak; it was called "the sick man of Europe." Its ruling sultans and grand viziers, or prime ministers, were corrupt and inefficient. It had lost much of its territory as colonies to the European powers. The Great Powers anxiously watched the empire crumble and pondered who would most benefit when it did.

Turkey's fate – known as the "Eastern Question" – most closely involved Russia and Austria-Hungary. The Russians were eager to control the straits linking the Black Sea to the Mediterranean. The Austrians, meanwhile, feared that Turkey's decline would leave their position in the Balkans under threat.

Other European powers also had ambitions in Turkey. Wilhelm II wanted the region to come under German influence. Britain and France, meanwhile, had economic interests that would be best served if the empire remained weak, but did not fall under the influence of another power.



Far left: The Turk sultan, Mohamm rides in ceremon his carriage. Dur Mohammed's rul 1909 to 1918 he forced to surrend much of the sulta traditional power the government c Young Turks.

But by the 1880s Britain and France were out of favor in Constantinople. The two countries were following policies of aggressive colonialization. The Turks could easily see the potential threat to the distant parts of the Ottoman realm.

As a latecomer to colonialism, however, Germany could represent itself as a true friend to

WAR PROFILES

Enver Pasha
1881–1922
Turkish politician

Enver Pasha was a y[illegible] ambitious, and na[illegible]alistic Turkish army officer. He had played a leading role in the Young Turk Revolution of 1908. He entered the government in 1913. In January 1914 he became Turkey's war minister, and at once got rid of senior military commanders who opposed his views.

Enver believed that Turkey must expand its armed forces, and also that it should form an alliance with one of the major powers. Without telling most of his government he made an alliance with Germany in July 1914, though he kept negotiating with the Allies. He also probably acted secretly with the Ge[illegible]ns to bring Turkey in[illegible] war in October.

Only in his early 30s Enver became Turkey's virtual dictator when war broke out. He made efforts to modernize the empire. His nationalist views contributed to the repression of the empire's minorities.

At the end of the war Enver went into exile. He was killed a few years later fighting with Turkish-speaking peoples of central Asia against Soviet rule.



Above: Enver Pasha, Turkish minister of war, poses in full ceremonial uniform.

the Turks. In an attempt to increase their influence the Germans promised the Turks what they wanted most: military reforms to make Turkey an effective force against Russia, France, and Britain if necessary.

Help from Germany

Turkey's turning to Germany brought immediate results. The Germans sent advisers to train, organize, and equip Turkish forces. Meanwhile British officials helped modernize the navy. After Turkey's disastrous Balkan War of 1912, when it lost to Serbia and Bulgaria, its leaders turned to Germany for more help.

But German help alone would not be enough to hold the empire together. The Ottoman Empire included huge numbers of non-Turkish peoples. Since the mid-19th century many of them had begun trying to break free from the rule of Constantinople. The Balkan peoples, such as the Greeks, Bulgarians, and Serbs, had the greatest success. In North Africa Ottoman holdings shrank as territories either declared independence or fell to European colonial powers. Italy, France, Britain, and even weak Spain took control of large North African territories, including Egypt, Algeria, and Morocco. Meanwhile Turkish lands in the Middle East also resounded with calls for independence.

Young Turks

In the face of the crisis, a group of nationalistic modernizers known as the "Young Turks" overthrew the old regime in 1908. They believed that Turkey had to abandon traditional Islamic government and adopt European civilization. The reformers forced the sultan to institute a democratic constitution modeled on Western ideas. They introduced a cabinet that briefly brought together many of the empire's nationalities to work for a rebirth of the state through modernization and equality. Throughout the world the phrase "Young Turk" came to be synonymous with youthful, modernizing reformers, particularly in the armed forces.

But the Turks were no longer masters of their own destiny. Turning to Germany had cost the Ottoman government what little independence it had left. Now German military advisers sat on key Turkish state committees and councils; they controlled the vital army forces defending the capital. When war broke out in Europe in 1914, it would be the Germans who dictated Turkey's policy and strategy.

RUSSIA

The vast Russian empire was eastern Europe's greatest power, but compared with some of its industrialized neighbors it was undeveloped, inefficient, and outdated.



nter Palace in St. urg, home of ; ruling czars.

At the outbreak of World War I the vast Russian empire stretched from Germany in the west to China in the east, and from the Arctic Ocean in the north to Asia in the south. But though Russia was bigger and more populous than its European neighbors, it was also backward in many ways. The empire's inability to live up to its potential earned it the nickname "the sleeping bear of Europe."

GEOGRAPHY	Bordered by 12 countries. Stretched from Germany in the west to China in the east
LAND AREA	8,600,000 square miles
POPULATION	166,000,000 (1910)
RULER	Czar Nicholas II (ruled 1894–1917)
CAPITAL	St. Petersburg (renamed Petrograd in 1914)
ALLIANCES	Triple Entente with Great Britain and France (1907)

A people in bondage

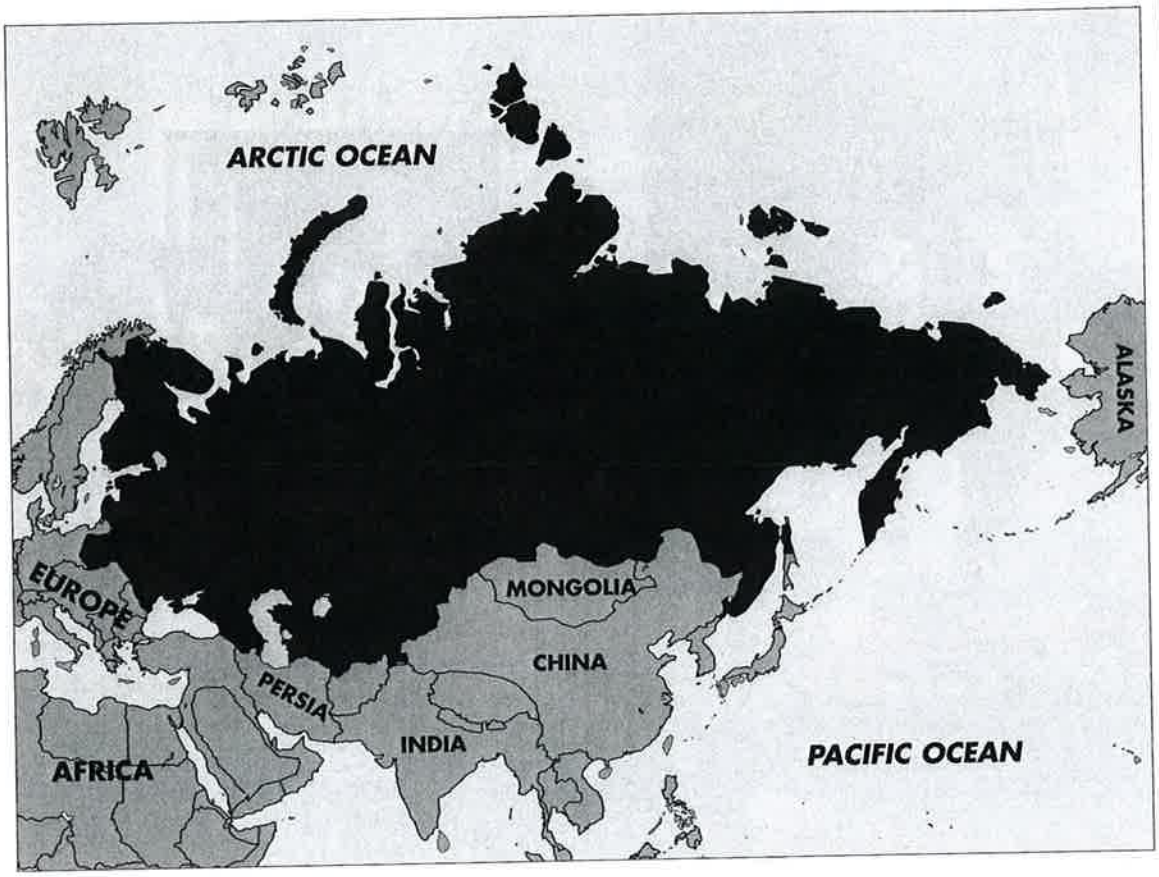
Russia had not always had such problems. During the first half of the 19th century its army had helped it dominate Europe's politics. But in 1853 Russia went to war with England, France, and Turkey in the Crimea, a region of southern Russia on the Black Sea. The once mighty Russian army suffered a humiliating defeat.

The defeat was dramatic proof of the problems underlying Russian society. Russia was economically stagnant and militarily backward. While its enemies used modern weapons and transportation, the Russian army had to walk to the Crimea and then starved from lack of supplies.

The reasons for Russia's lack of development were simple. The empire's vast

EMPIRI
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Russia



Though Russia wa: bigger than its neighbors, its vast handicapped rath than helped its economic develop

distances meant that its rich natural supplies of raw material such as iron ore and coal lay hundreds of miles from its few industrial centers. While the rest of Europe built railroad systems, Russia still relied heavily on slow barge transport along the empire's rivers. When Russia sold grain, its only great export, to Europe the journey took a year and 70 percent of the grain rotted on the way.

But what made Russia's problems worse was its outdated social system. The empire was an autocracy, ruled by the absolute power of one man, the czar. He governed a state based on serfdom (*see page 46*). Russian serfs farmed the land for the nobles who effectively owned them. As few as 500,000 Russians owned the other 165 million of the vast population. The nobility, meanwhile, provided both the state's large body of civil servants and the officers of its army.

While the rest of Europe became ever more industrialized during the mid-19th century, serfdom meant that Russia's economy stagnated. Instead of moving off the land into urban factories, the majority of serfs were legally obliged to serve only on the lands of the noblemen who owned them. Without free movement of labor, factories could not grow and the economy could not mature. Although a few entrepreneurs made huge fortunes, such prosperity came to so few that it had no effect on the larger economy.

Pressures for change

Russia's czars were frightened to change the system. There had been a series of violent rebellions by the serfs in the past. And

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if Russia became more industrialized its cities and factories might become hotbeds of revolutionary socialism. Other dangers threatened the empire from within. Over the past centuries it had greatly expanded by incorporating neighboring countries such as the Germanic states on the Baltic Sea and Poland. Millions of people had become national minorities within the empire. Some, such as the Poles, were bitterly resentful.

In the mid-19th century the pressures grew for Russia to change. The army was defeated in the Crimea. Intellectuals and students who were familiar with Western thought, including the communist theories of Karl Marx, wanted to change the whole political system. The czar's secret police tried to stop not only all change but even any discussion of it. But by the 1860s radical activity had spread into the officer corps and general staff, where some of Russia's best-educated young men worked. They wanted a strong, developed Russia. They saw serfdom and the provincial nobility as the two great obstacles to Russian modernization.

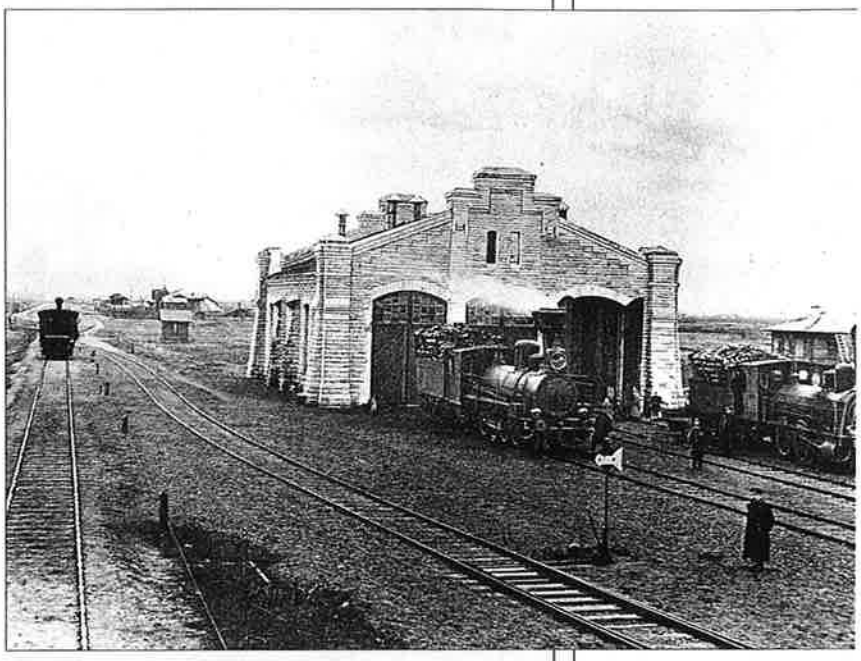
The seeds of change

In 1861 Czar Alexander II, who came to the throne just after the Crimean War, gave way to the pressure. He freed the serfs, although the conditions of this freedom meant that they still could not leave

Railroads and war

In modern warfare railroads could make the difference between victory and defeat. Thanks to its rail network, for example, Germany could get its armies to Russia's border almost a month before Russia could bring its own forces to fight Germany. Germany's railroads had rendered Russia defenseless.

Not until Russia's alliance with France in 1894 did the Russian army receive financial support from the French for railroad construction. By then it had begun building the Trans-Siberian railroad across the whole country. After 1910 the army turned its attention to Europe. It built lines ready to mobilize against the German states in a desperate race against time.



A railroad shed stands amidst the flat landscape of Siberia in 1911. Russia's Trans-Siberian railroad, completed in 1904, wa the longest in the world

their land. The reform was not enough for the radicals. They turned increasingly to more violent methods. In 1881 they assassinated Alexander.

His successor, Alexander III, reacted against his predecessor's reforms and adopted policies of severe repression against radicals and national minorities. When Alexander died in 1894, his son, Nicholas II, carried on the repression.

Under Nicholas, however, Russia did at last begin full-scale industrialization and railroad building thanks to the urgings of his finance minister. From then until World War I broke out, Russia recorded the most rapid industrial growth in the Western world. But since it was starting from nothing, the autocratic state could not possibly catch up to its neighbors.

The Russian army remained weak. The soldiers were serfs who were drafted for life and they were equipped with antiquated equipment from old wars. They were ill-prepared for modern industrialized warfare. That became clear from 1904 to 1905 when they suffered a shock defeat by Japan in East Asia. In 1914 it would become clearer still.

WHERE TO FIND..

Russian Industry: 6:23; 6:64
Japan's War With Russia: 1:66
Battle of Tannenberg: 6:12
February Revolution: 6:80
October Revolution: 6:100
Postwar World: Russia: 8:72

AUSTRIA-HUNGARY

Once dominant in Europe, the Austro-Hungarian Empire was crumbling before the nationalist desires of its subject peoples.



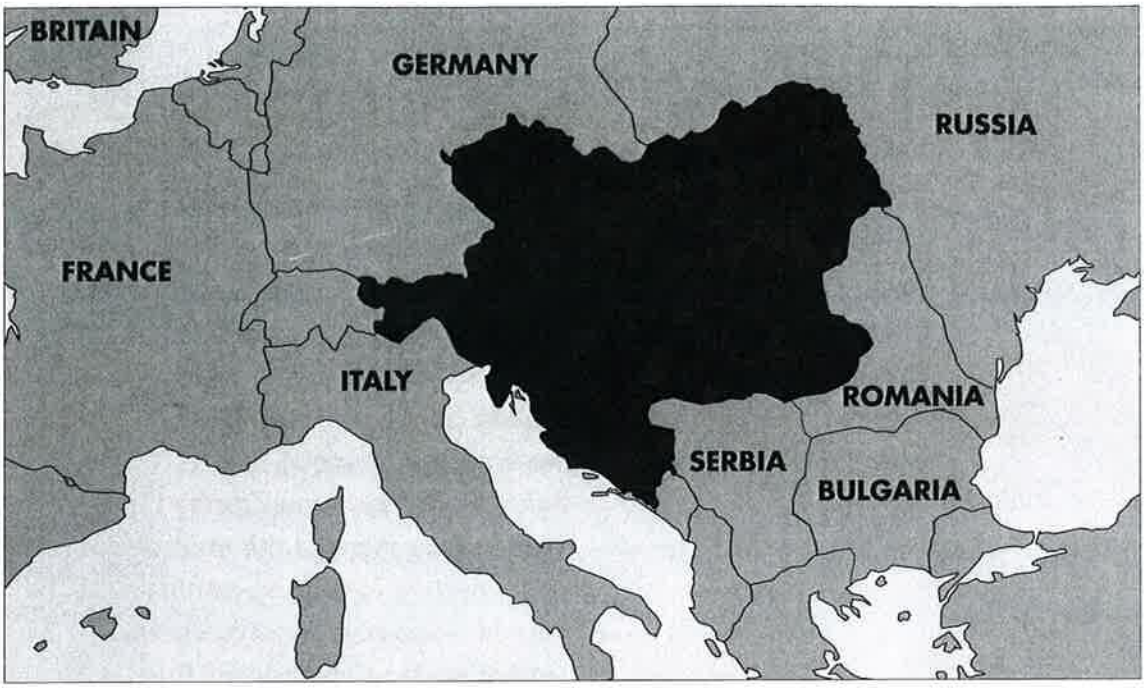
Danube River flows the parliament ding in Budapest, gary. In 1867 the trians passed siderable political er to the Hungarian tal

In 1900 Austria-Hungary was in desperate need of reform. It comprised a range of non-Austrian, non-Hungarian subjects. And at the empire's heart the split between Austria's German-speakers and Hungary's Magyar-speakers obstructed national development. Hungarian nationalists chafed as the Austrian Emperor Franz Josef tried to bring the two peoples closer. Meanwhile Austrian nationalists dreamed of expanding the empire. Geography and politics left only one route for expansion: south into the disputed lands of the Balkan peninsula (*see page 39*).

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Austria-Hun

Austria's only cha
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in the Balkan pen



For the first half of the 19th century Vienna, capital of Austria, had dominated central Europe. Vienna's statesmen kept a tight lid on all forms of nationalist challenge to the empire. They encouraged destructive competition between the dozens of small kingdoms that then comprised modern Germany.

In 1848, however, the system came crashing down. A series of liberal, nationalist revolutions caused upheaval across Europe. The Austrian dynasty struggled on for another decade. During the 1860s, however, Austria could not compete with Prussia as leader of the German states. In 1866 Prussia underlined its superiority by crushing the Austrian armies.

A dual monarchy

To preserve his dying empire, Franz Josef fashioned a new arrangement with his Hungarian subjects. He crafted an "arrangement" which gave the Hungarian government in Budapest equal standing with Vienna on matters that concerned the Magyars. It created the "Dual Monarchy": one emperor with two kingdoms. The arrangement recognized Hungary's privileged position within the empire; it gave Hungarian leaders access to the high offices of government. It also encouraged the hopes of Magyar nationalists.

Yet the Hungarians never tolerated nationalist hopes among the kingdom's Slavic peoples, such as Poles, Croats, Serbs, Slovenes, and Ukrainians. Just the opposite: Budapest feared that a growing Slavic

WAR PROFILES

Franz Josef 1830-1916

Austrian mona

Throughout his reig
from 1848 to 191
Franz Josef worke
maintain the Austr
empire's position a
Great Power.

The king was honorable, tactful, courageous. Able work long hours, h control of foreign military policy. A practical man, he workable solutions state's problems.

The king's person was filled with trag His unhappy marri ended when his wi was assassinated; son committed suic and his heir, Franz Ferdinand, was murdered in 1914

FactFile

GEOGRAPHY	Central Europe, comprising modern Austria, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia, and including P Serbs, and other Slavs from the Balkans
LAND AREA	260,600 square miles
POPULATION	46,997,000 (1909)
RULER	Emperor Franz Josef I (ruled 1848 to 1916)
CAPITAL	Vienna
ALLIANCES	Triple Alliance with Germany and Italy (1882)

The Balkans

By the 19th century the fading of the Ottoman Muslims left Austria as the best-placed power to replace Turkish rule over the Christians of the Balkan peninsula of southern Europe. There was only one competitor: Orthodox Russia.

In 1876, as Russia prepared to fight the Turks, it bought Austrian neutrality by parceling out the Balkans between them. The war brought Russia little reward. Austria, however, began to take territory along the Adriatic coast of the Balkans.

The Balkans were a powder keg. Austria was set to clash with Serbia, the strongest Balkan state. Serbia also wanted Adriatic territories. The Austrian and Serbian paths met in Bosnia. Their supporters – Germany for Austria, Russia for Serbia – would let them fight, if necessary, to get their way. And although the Balkan states relied on Great Power sponsors, they were no one's pawns: neither Russia nor Austria could control their client states in the Balkans.

population could only weaken Hungary's position. The Slavs would demand their own "arrangement."

The problem was particularly acute in the Balkans. The Austrian empire already included some of the Slavic people of the peninsula. Others, however, fell under the influence of the Ottoman Empire. Incorporating more of the Balkans under Hapsburg rule, the Hungarians feared, would inevitably encourage the Slavs to demand their own national rights. Rather than seize territory in the Balkans, the Hungarians wanted to preserve the Ottoman Empire intact.

The Austrians disagreed. After 1870 they had forged a close alliance with the newly unified Germany. The empire was bordered by three states – Italy, Serbia, and Romania – with nationalist claims on its lands. Its fourth neighbor, Germany, was essential for its future stability.

A fateful move

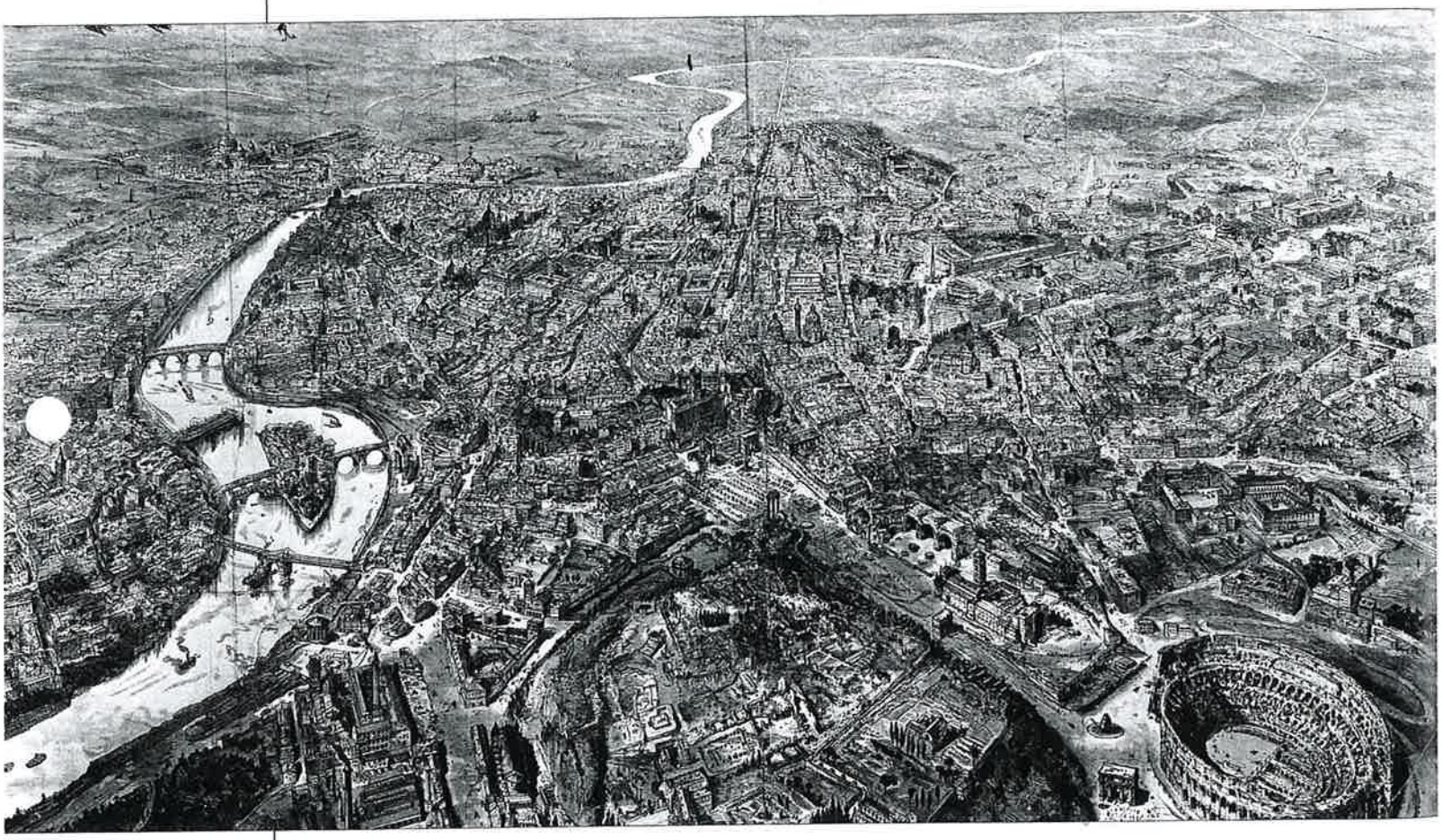
With German backing, Austrian imperialists were ready to fulfill their dreams for expansion. Despite the fears of the Hungarians they turned to the Balkans. In 1878 the Austrians occupied Bosnia-Herzegovina. Its inclusion in the empire in 1908 introduced a large new Slavic population, which heightened tension between Austria and Hungary. The annexation also created passionate enemies south of the monarchy's borders, where the Serbs also wanted to claim Bosnia-Herzegovina. Most tellingly, it set the Dual Monarchy on a crash course with the Russian empire.

WHERE TO FIND

Nationalism: 1:8
Balkan Wars: 1:8
Assassination in Sarajevo: 1:90
Life in Austria-Hungary: 6:28
Czech Political Activism: 6:52; 6:86
Collapse of Austria-Hungar 6:114

ITALY

Italy joined the war in 1915 with scores to settle against its Austrian neighbors, but its checkered recent past made it doubtful that the country was ready for modern warfare.



An 1890 engraving shows the Tiber River winding through Rome, the Italian capital. The ruins of the coliseum in the foreground recall the glory of the ancient Roman empire.

For many Europeans Italy had two faces. On the one hand, its artistic history and natural beauty made it a romantic and cultured country to be admired. In contrast Italian politics and industry since the country became unified in 1861 were often ridiculed. The other European nations had little understanding of or patience with the state dubbed "the least of the Great Powers."

Italy's weakness had numerous causes. Despite the existence of some industry, the population remained largely rural. But even though most people worked on the land, Italy could not feed itself. Its government was corrupt and prone to cronyism

and big-name patronage. Its education system was weak, and many people could not read. The country was split by rigid class divisions. The poor south and the relatively rich north held each other in mutual loathing. And Italy's military history was short and less than impressive.

All the same, the other powers courted Italy for their alliances as the balance of Europe changed in the late 19th century. Italy had good reason to be cautious. Its history in international affairs was checkered. Its struggle for unification in the mid-19th century – the *Risorgimento* – had been inspired by the desire to rid the Italian peninsula of foreign influence.

The struggle for unification

In the middle of the 19th century Italy was a patchwork of kingdoms under various rulers. The Austrian Hapsburg empire held the northern regions of Lombardy and Venetia; the south and the island of Sicily, meanwhile, were ruled by monarchs of Spanish origin in the so-called Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. The Vatican dominated most of central Italy. Only in the peninsula's northwestern corner, on the border with France, was there a significant "Italian" state, the Kingdom of Sardinia.

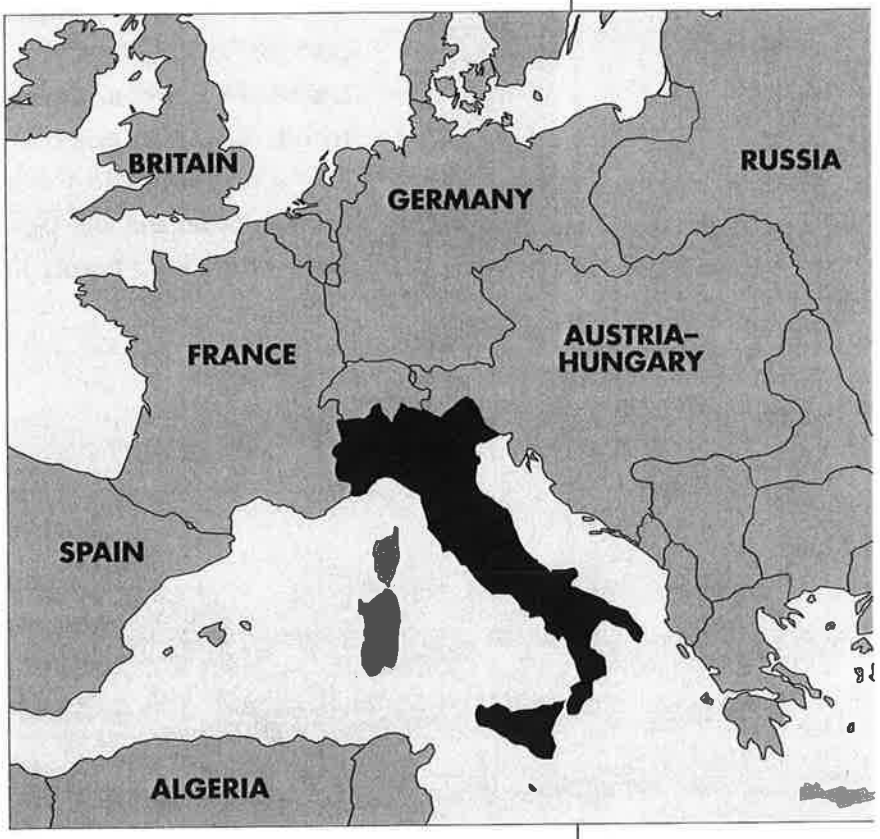
Unification would not be easy. The Italians were likely to face opposition from the great European powers. Already in 1848 and 1849 the Sardinian kingdom had lost two "wars of liberation" to free other parts of Italy from Austrian rule. Nationalistic and smart, the prime minister, Camillo Cavour, was not eager to fight Austria alone again.

In 1859 Cavour persuaded France to join an alliance against Austria. The French soon captured the Lombardy region but then made peace with the Austrians. Cavour was left in the lurch. Meanwhile in the rest of the peninsula republican revolutionaries overthrew petty dukedoms. The Roman Giuseppe Mazzini and the soldier-revolutionary Giuseppe Garibaldi defeated the Vatican and the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. The Vatican retained control of the city of Rome, but little else.

THE MAP OF EUROPE

Italy

Protected by the sea to the south and the Alps to the north, Italy was largely isolated from the rest of Europe.



FactFile

GEOGRAPHY	Peninsula separated from rest of Europe by Alps mountain range
LAND AREA	91,277 square miles
POPULATION	32,965,000 (1901)
RULER	King Victor Emmanuel III (ruled 1900 to 1946)
CAPITAL	Rome
ALLIANCES	Triple Alliance with Germany and Austria (1882)



In 1861 Italy became united under the King of Sardinia – almost. Venetia remained in Austrian hands. A nationalist crusade, "Irredentism," arose to regain the last "unredeemed" lands that Italians thought should belong to their new state. In 1866 the campaign finally succeeded while the Austrian empire found itself preoccupied with war against Prussia.

A republican state

The *Risorgimento* shaped the new nation. It had been a middle-class, republican movement rather than an aristocratic venture. Now the new Italy was a republican state dominated by the middle classes. The new king's power was limited by parliament. And the army, traditionally a force for conservatism, had little of the prestige enjoyed by the military of other nations.

Monarchists and supporters of the Roman Catholic church esteemed the army as the only institution in the republic that stood for traditional values. The liberals and socialists who now ran Italy, however, distrusted the army. It became a dumping ground for men who were too incompetent to take up a profession.

Even a poor army had its uses, however. By the 1880s the Italian population was growing dissatisfied with the government. As a distraction, the government tried to build an Italian empire in Africa.

The army proved unequal to the task. Italy already had a colony in Eritrea on the Red Sea. Now it struggled to add to its possessions. In 1896 in Abyssinia, now Ethiopia, the army was defeated at Adowa by the Abyssinians. The German chancellor Bismarck dismissed Italy as having "a large appetite and very poor teeth."

In Europe, meanwhile, Italy had made an unlikely partnership. In 1882 it joined Bismarck's Triple Alliance with Germany and Austria-Hungary. Italy resented France's betrayal in 1859 more than it did Austria's continued possession of parts of northeast Italy. Italy's new commitments helped ensure that by the 1890s zealous irredentism was largely out of date.

Nevertheless, some Italians still eyed the disputed border regions. Simply because they were in an alliance with Austria, they did not stop planning its overthrow. In 1909 one politician noted, "All efforts must unite to preserve the Austrian alliance until the day when we are ready for war." That day was rapidly approaching.

THE MA
OF EURO

Italy

WAR PROFILES

Victor Emmanu
1869-1949
Italian monarch



Victor Emmanuel ascended the Italic throne in 1900. Although honored other heads of sta Victor Emmanuel l little political powe was largely irrelev Italian policy befo during World Wa except as a figure Italian unity. After War II he was exil a new Italian government.

WHERE TO F

Italy Enters th War: 3:64

Treaty of Lon 3:65

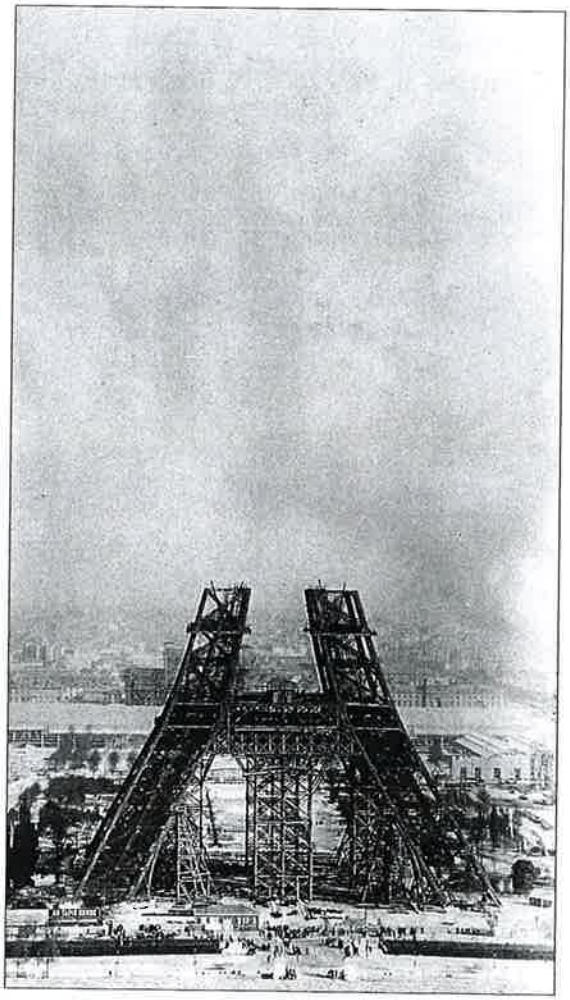
FRANCE

The French prepared for war in 1914 hungry for revenge for past defeats and eager to regain lost national glory. But the country remained potentially weakened by internal tensions.

At the dawn of the 20th century France was still haunted by an event from 30 years before. At the Battle of Sedan in September 1870 Prussian troops had easily defeated the French army. The French troops were weak, slow, and poorly led. France lost the rich border regions of Alsace and Lorraine to the new unified Germany. In the eyes of many Frenchmen the country had lost something even more important: its pride.

The defeat at Sedan proved a watershed for the French. They launched a thorough reorganization of their army. The empire of Napoleon III gave way to a new government, the Third Republic. For many people the contrast between the two governments was stark. Napoleon's empire, in their view, had been prosperous, strong, and powerful. The politicians of the Third Republic, on the other hand, proved better at creating scandal than running the country.

The officer corps that dominated the French army, in particular, remained loyal to the imperial glory of Napoleon III's

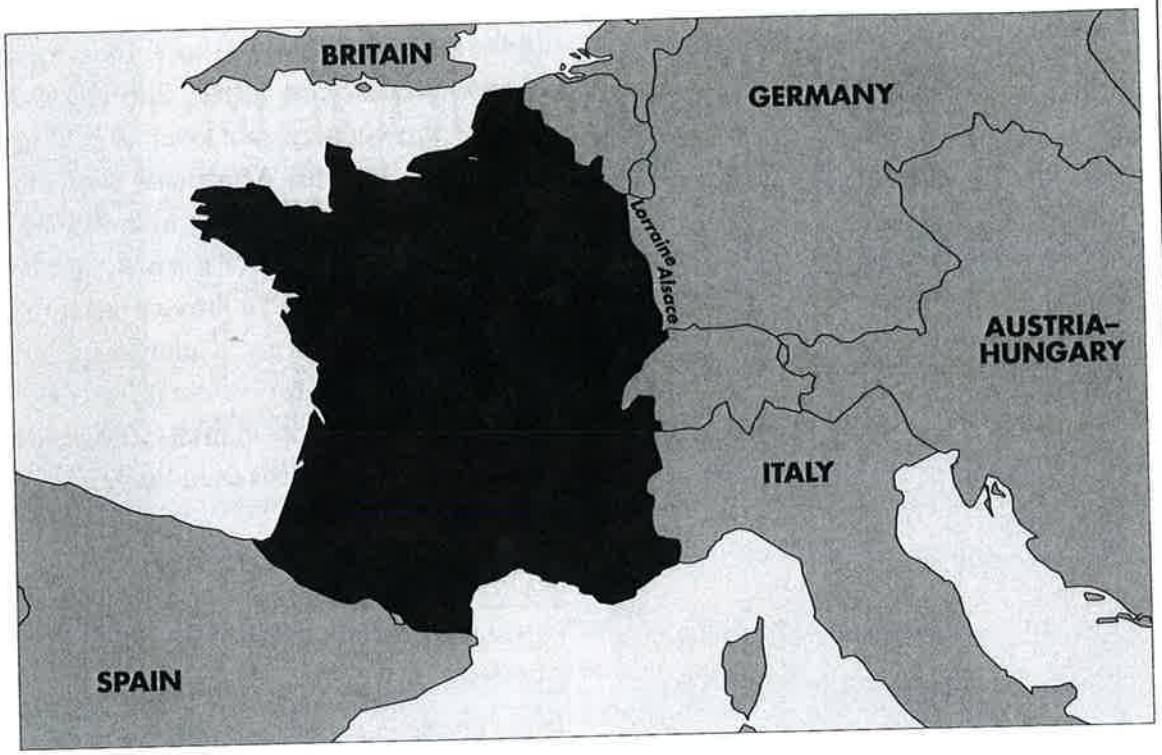


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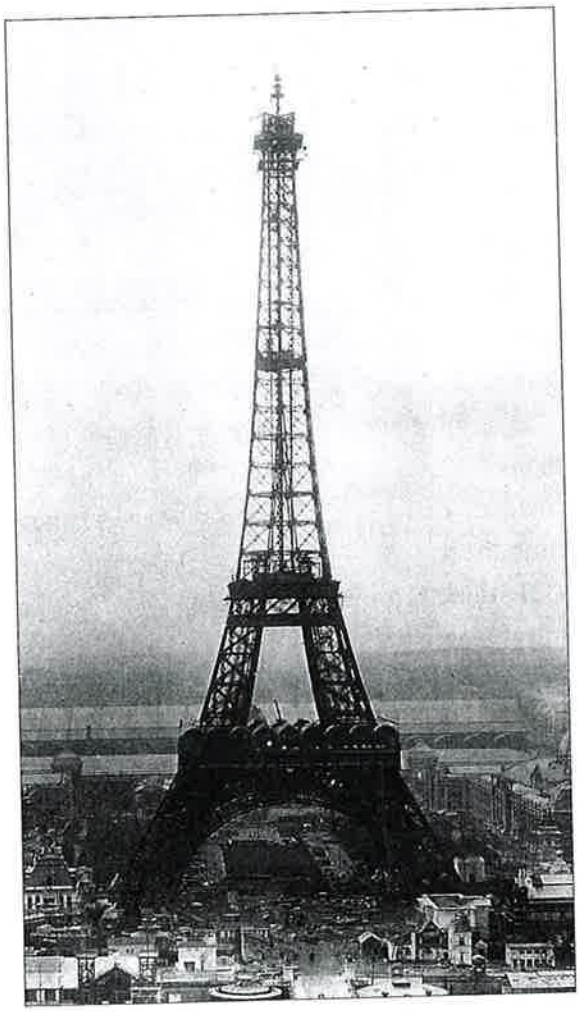
GEOGRAPHY	Western Europe, bordered in the east by Germany, which possessed the disputed territories of Alsace and Lorraine
LAND AREA	207,170 square miles
POPULATION	39,252,000 (1906)
PRESIDENT	Raymond Poincaré (held office 1913 to 1920)
CAPITAL	Paris
ALLIANCES	Triple Entente with Great Britain and Russia (1907)

THE MAP OF EUROPE

France



France's eastern borde with Germany lay next to the disputed regions of Alsace and Lorraine, annexed by the Germans after the defeat of France in 1870.



uncle, Napoleon Bonaparte (*see page 25*), under whom France had dominated Europe early in the 19th century. The officers openly hated the republic. They also harbored an intense desire for revenge on Germany. Like many others they believed that France only needed a worthy ruler to lead them to war and victory.

Dreams of colonial glory

By 1870 French industry lagged behind that of Britain and Germany. Only Russia had a worse railroad system. The population was stagnant while that of other nations grew. Only when it came to its colonies did France have few rivals. Imperialism offered a chance to regain the nation's lost glory.

The French colonized Indochina, West and Equatorial Africa, North Africa, and parts of the Mediterranean. By the turn of the century they challenged the imperial power of Britain. But the French people

AR ROFILES

Raymond P aré
1860–1934
French politician

Poincaré served at almost every level of government during his 42 years in office. He believed that a strong man could change French politics – and thought himself such a man. In 1913 ambition drove him to give up the post of prime minister in order to become president of France, a position that traditionally had little power.

Poincaré made the president's office highly powerful. He directed France's alliance with Russia and the early part of its war against Germany.

Late in 1917, however, Poincaré's presidency fel' k into obscurity. Eage for victories on the battlefield, the French people elected his political opponent, Georges Clemenceau, to be prime minister.



Above: French President Raymond Poincaré's achievements failed to live to his ambitions.

would not tolerate colonial adventure if it cost them anything. When it did, they voted prime ministers out of office. At its heart French colonial imperialism was a symptom of vanity, glory, and decay, rather than vigor and strength.

The real challenge remained in Europe, and the real enemy remained Germany. In 1894 the French came to a military "understanding" with the Russian empire. Both countries needed the other's support in the case of German aggression. If the French could help modernize Russia's railroads to mobilize an army rapidly they could force Germany to fight on two fronts.

Threats and upheaval

Approaching the end of the century, which is called the *fin de siècle* in French, France remained divided at home and potentially vulnerable abroad. While Germany increased the size of its navy and planned to do the same to its army, France underwent an upheaval. Soon after the Russian alliance the country split over a military scandal, the Dreyfus Affair (*see page 26*). The Affair exposed the army as antirepublican and anti-Semitic. For the next decade the government waged a purge against the officer corps and army leadership. They also attacked the conservative influence of the Roman Catholic church. The strife rocked France and weakened the army.

A new promise of security

France's greatest potential ally against Germany was Russia. But between 1904 and 1906 Russia first went to war with Japan and then suffered attempted revolution at home; it seemed in no position to help France. With their domestic and strategic security threatened, the French tried a new approach. They agreed with Britain not to expand their colonies in Africa; tensions eased and the possibility of the two powers working together increased. When Germany tried to intimidate French interests in Morocco, the European powers forced Berlin into a humbling retreat.

By 1907 Russia had resumed the semblance of stability and shifted its gaze back toward central Europe, where France thought it should be. And all three powers – Britain, France, and Russia – began to move together to contain German ambitions in Europe and beyond. In 1907 the British and French began preliminary talks to coordinate their military activities in the event of a war with Germany. French and Russian planners attempted to bring their mobilization plans into harmony. They failed, but for France the balance of power seemed gradually to be improving.

BRITAIN

For much of the 19th century Britain focused on its colonies rather than on Europe. But by 1900 its imperial power was fading, along with its economic dominance of the world.



Wealthy Britons enjoy the traditional annual Henley rowing regatta on July 1, 1914. Only a month later war would sweep away many aspects of their privileged world.

FactFile

GEOGRAPHY	Island in the North Sea off the northern coast of France
LAND AREA	120,950 square miles
POPULATION	41,609,000 (1901)
RULER	King George V (ruled 1910 to 1936)
CAPITAL	London
ALLIANCES	Triple Entente with France and Russia (1907)

In 1914 Britain had less reason than any of the other great powers to go to war. Because it was an island the conflict brewing in Europe did not threaten its borders. Its vast colonial territories around the world were also safe. And its alliances with other European powers had loopholes that would have allowed it to avoid going to war with Austria and Germany. But for 20 years Britain had been involved in a heated competition for power with Germany. Its once unchallenged economic and political dominance of the world was now under severe threat.

A waning power

During the late 19th century Britain had probably been the world's leading power. Its industries and trade spread its influence around the globe. Its empire covered more land than any one country had ever governed. It was said that the sun never set on the empire, it was so large.

By 1914, however, Britain's status was slipping. The country that had been home to the industrial revolution of the early 19th century had surrendered its leadership of some industries to Germany or the United States. From the 1870s onward Britain had been exporting both material

– railroad tracks, locomotives, pumps, machinery – and the men to operate and repair those things. Britons traveled to the four corners of the globe with their wares. The island-nation's commercial domination brought new orders for its industries at home. But such success contained the seeds of failure.

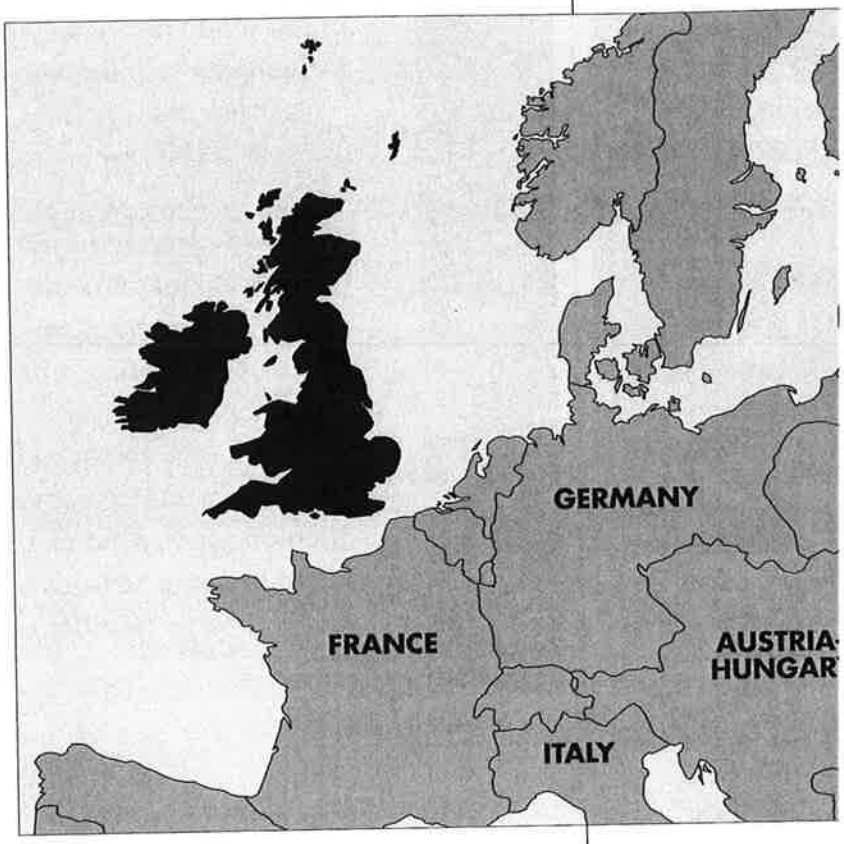
In the United States, for example, British influence led to breakneck modernization of steel production. The result was that in 1886 the United States outproduced Britain in this key commodity for industrial development, railroad construction, and power. Meanwhile the development of new propeller-driven ships in the 1880s, mainly by the British, made it quicker for goods to cross the Atlantic.

Britain's industrial position could not match that of rising Germany either. Even before unification in 1871 German industry had bound itself closely to the country's technical schools, guaranteeing a steady flow of well-qualified labor.

By 1900 both the United States and Germany were making more steel than Britain; Germany also led in both electrical and chemical engineering; the United States dominated railroad development.

Britain made its own problems worse. From the 1870s its policy of free trade meant that its industries were not protected by government measures such as taxes on imports. Britain's industry was too busy competing for markets to modernize effectively or support technical innovations. And the British were slow to apply scientific advances to practical technology.

Britain looked less to Europe during the 19th century than to its own colonies, though by 1914 many of its Irish subjects were demanding independence.





Well-heeled racegoers wear mourning for King Edward VII, who died in 1910.

ar right: Police guard coalmine in south Vales during a 1910 abo 'ke that led to ioting. British workers' ampaigns for labor ights brought them into onflict with both mployers and the iberal government.

ondon's docks around 1900 combine old and ew. A forest of masts epresent the ailing ships that helped uild Britain's empire; on the left, smoke rises rom the funnel of a ew generation of ropeller-driven ship.

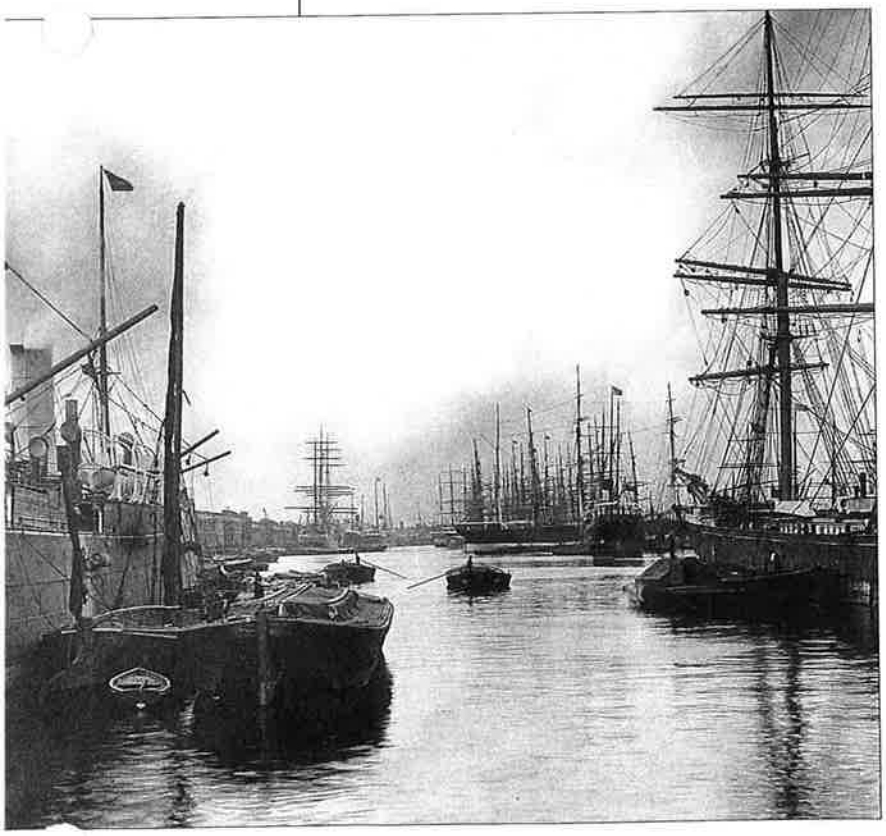
A fading empire

Before 1914 every British schoolchild could color vast regions of the globe red. That was the color maps used to mark the territories of the British empire, the greatest in history.

That empire was built on economic strength, energetic trade, and a spirit of discovery. The British penetrated North America and Asia, the South Pacific, India, and finally Africa to create a worldwide empire by 1900.

Distant commitments did not equal profits, however. Astute businessmen and government leaders knew that Britain received only a tiny proportion of its wealth from its overseas territories. The colonies, meanwhile, absorbed vast quantities of money and endless streams of administrators.

Before 1914 both governed and governors had grown weary of colonialism. Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and South Africa became self-governing. They still, however, chose to remain tied to "Mother Britain," mainly for economic reasons.



Nevertheless Britain still held its lead in coal production and export. The British also outstripped their competitors in textiles and naval technology, such as marine propulsion, gunnery, and optical sights. Its naval technology and shipbuilding remained supreme. Britain's merchant and naval fleets were the largest in the world; they outnumbered all others combined.

Changes in society

The changes in Britain's once-dominant industry affected society and politics, too. Throughout the 19th century Britain's politics had been relatively peaceful compared with those of most other European states. Its political process adapted to change, granting limited rights and social welfare to the lower classes, though still