Questions for Discussion and Review (V)

Nota bene: These questions are for the section meetings after the midterm examination. It is designed to cover more than one week.

RELEVANT LECTURES: Numbers 14 (“Darwin and the Darwinian Revolution”), 15 (“Nationalism, National Unification: Italy and Germany”), 16 (“The Victorian Age”), 17 (“Russia between East and West”), 18 (“Napoleon and the Paris Commune of 1871”), 19 (The Belle Epoque; Fin de Siècle; Imperialism”), 20 (“The Dreyfus Affair”).

RELEVANT READING: McKay, chapters 25 [the final pp. on Marx have been assigned already], 26; Perry chapters 7 [partly review], 8, 9.

1. Identifications.
   a. Boxer Uprising (“Rebellion”)
   b. Meiji Restoration
   c. George Picquart
   d. “White Man’s Burden”
   e. Sergei Witte
   f. Battle of Sedan
   g. Alsace-Lorraine
   h. mir (obshchina)
   i. Narodniks
   j. Émile Zola

2. Review Questions.
   a. What were the reasons for the failure of the “liberal” reforms of Alexander II? If he had not been assassinated might they have had more of a chance for long-term success? Why did he embark on a program of reform in the first place? What was the importance of the Crimean War in provoking the reforms?

   b. How can the “new imperialism” be distinguished from the old? How persuasive do you find Hobson’s explanation of it?

   c. What were the most fundamental causes for what McKay calls the “Great Migration” out of Europe in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries? Distinguish between “push” and “pull.”

   d. How might Bonapartism as seen in the rule of Napoleon III be termed “proto-fascist” (that is, fascism before the word, presaging future developments)? How did he combine both left- and right-wing elements?

   e. What is meant by terming the Paris Commune of 1871 a “festival of the oppressed”? Why has the Commune exercised such an appeal for subsequent generations of socialists and communists?
f. How can one explain what appears to be such a sudden surge of popular anti-Semitism in France with the Dreyfus Affair? What were the main differences in the conditions of the Jews in France as compared to Russia?

g. What were the differences between British colonial policy in India and in Africa? How can these differences be accounted for?

h. “One cannot understand Bismarck’s success without understanding the failures of 1848.” What is meant by that? Was the failure of German liberal nationalists somehow inevitable—was there something about German traditions, German history, and German socio-economic conditions that made liberal nationalism an impossible dream—or was the force of Bismarck’s personality the decisive factor?

i. Compare Camillo Cavour and Bismarck as practitioners of Realpolitik. How did the two of them exploit nationalism? What were their attitudes to liberalism?

3. Discussion Questions.

a. Heinrich von Treitschke (in Perry pp. 293-4) evokes the sense of community that men feel in war, the extent to which pettiness and egotism vanish. He further comments “what a perversion of morality to want to banish heroism from human life.” What is your reaction to these remarks? What were the arguments used by pacifists and Marxists against thinkers like Treitschke? How important were Treitschke’s personal experiences (in particular, the wars he himself witnessed) in forming his attitudes? What could he possibly have meant by saying that “the furtherance of an everlasting peace is fundamentally reactionary?” How might he be considered a “typical” German bourgeois of the late nineteenth century?

b. The imperialists of the late nineteenth century often portrayed themselves as bringing “civilization” to the “backward races.” This view is now deeply discredited. If this self-portrayal was inaccurate, what were the real motives behind imperialism? Did the European presence in any way benefit the newly dominated peoples? Would it have better if Europeans had simply left them alone? Can you see any parallels in this question and the debates between the optimists and pessimists concerning the industrial revolution?

c. What was it about European civilization that allowed it to dominate the rest of the world as it had done so remarkably by the eve of World War I? In this regard, do you see any merit in the arguments of the social darwinists? Is social Darwinism possible without being “racist”?

e. “Since at least the end of the eighteenth century, but especially since the middle of the nineteenth century, to the present, Russia has been driven by the threat of a more advanced West. The extraordinary alternations in the country’s history—indeed, the often repellent crimes of its ruling order—may be traced ultimately to that constant threat.” Do you think this is a valid commentary on Russian history and, by implication, on the peculiarities of Russian national character?
“Central to the Victorian mentality was the notion of ‘beneficial struggle.’ This explains not only the attractions of Darwin’s *Origin of Species* but of Marx’s *Das Kapital* as well. Both works are unmistakable products of the Victorian mentality.” What are the decisive elements of struggle and suffering in the theories of these two men? How do they differ? Do you agree that struggle and suffering are necessary to progress—or is that merely a “dated” idea of the mid-nineteenth century?