

China, Kamerun, and the New Tariff Law, 1901–1903

After Berlin's China crisis of 1900/01, the period from late 1901 to early 1903 then marked an ebb in the influence of extra-European populations upon German politics. At the same time that the costs of German overseas ventures diminished, the controversy surrounding the renewal of the national tariff law consumed an unprecedented amount of attention. This combination tended to mute the domestic political dimension of imperialism for the remainder of the Reichstag session. Still, the congruence of national and Catholic interests in China continued to exercise a generally cohesive influence upon the partnership of government and Center. Meanwhile, the party's strategically decisive position in the domestic tariff question meant that the Bülow government had to reckon with the possibly unpleasant domestic political ramifications of angry Catholic missionaries publicizing the grievances brought by colonized peoples against their German rulers.

Continuing Government-Center Rapprochement via China

In the six months from November 1900 to May 1901 the Reichstag had authorized a grand total of 306 million marks for the East Asian Expedition and the nation's colonial projects. By contrast, over the course of the following two years, the Berlin government sought altogether just 90 million in Reich subsidies for imperialist ventures. The return of the fiscal burden of imperialism to a somewhat more manageable level can be ascribed primarily to the partial troop withdrawals from China along with the absence of revolts elsewhere in the German colonies. Whereas the East Asian Expedition of 18,700 men had absorbed the proceeds of loans in the amount of 276 million marks, the withdrawal of 13,900 German troops in 1901 and of another 2,200 in 1902 brought the administration's Occupation Brigade budget down to 15 million marks annually by 1903. Beginning in 1902, Berlin also rendered the brigade's costs more palatable to the Reichstag by ostensibly offsetting the East Asian budget with China's reparations payments of nearly 12 million a year although the latter were actually earmarked for amortisation of the 276 million already spent.¹

1 DB, Third SupB 1900, Nov. 14, 1900, RDS 8, RKZA, 934:92–96, BAP. Bachem, Mar. 15, 1901, RTSB, 1878D. Riedel to Crailsheim, Nov. 21, 1901, Communication, MA 76017, ByHSA. Richter, Mar. 3,

During the waning of the Yihetuan crisis, as at its peak, the compatibility of Catholic and German national interests vis-à-vis the vanquished population of northern China fostered a cooperative spirit between party and government. The Bülow administration continued to find its patronage of the South Shandong mission a convenient avenue for courting Catholic opinion at home. Conversely, the Centrists still recognized in the Chinese context opportunities to oblige the government without alienating their constituents. These harmonizing trends were accentuated by the Social Democrats' undiminished attacks upon both Germany's national policy and Catholic missionary misconduct in China. Only the question of the rate of troop withdrawal from northern China might have occasioned friction between the Center and the government. Nevertheless, for reasons rooted both overseas and at home, neither partner allowed this issue to disturb the concluding phases of the China rapprochement.

The two years from late 1901 to early 1903 witnessed the Bülow administration's continued employment of gracious gestures toward the Catholic missions in China as a political device for courting the Center Party at home. Just as in the parliamentary year 1900/01, the chancellor and War Minister Goßler sought to please the Centrists by praising the Catholic China missions in the Reichstag. For example, in a thoroughly unrelated discussion Bülow expressly underlined Berlin's continued commitment to its protectorate over the missions in China as an honorable duty.² Countering Bebel's renewed attacks upon the missions in China, Goßler likewise expressed admiration for the eighty thousand Chinese Christians who had chosen martyrdom over apostasy, and he praised the French Catholic bishop of Beijing for courageously defending his besieged congregation from the Yihetuan.³ Finally, the new German envoy to Beijing, Alfons Freiherr Mumm von Schwarzenstein, considered his government's ongoing patronage of the South Shandong mission a crucial means for retaining Centrist support in Berlin. Therefore, notwithstanding his tacit sympathy for complaints of prominent Chinese officials regarding missionary misconduct, he initiated a successful motion with the Beijing government for Bishop Anzer's promotion to the highest rank within the Chinese mandarin in recognition of the prelate's purported role in fostering peace between

1902, RTSB, 4526A. Stockmann, Reporter, Mar. 3, 1902, RTSB, 4521D. Stockmann, Mar. 18, 1903, RTSB, 8713C. Richthofen, Mar. 18, 1903, RTSB, 8714A.

2 Bülow, Mar. 3, 1902, RTSB, 4527B.

3 Goßler, Jan. 11, 1902, RTSB, 3319B/C. Bebel, Jan. 11, 1902, RTSB, 3310C, 3313B/C.