



World War One Was Caused by English Medical Incompetence

A Research Paper

by

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Level 3, Como Centre, 299 Chapel St, South Yarra, Victoria, 3141, Australia
PO Box 9368, South Yarra, Victoria, 3141, Australia Tel: +61 3 9018 7004 Email: enquiries@historywow.com
www.historywow.com

Introduction

The cause of World War One was English medical incompetence.

An English throat specialist's 1887 mis-diagnosis of German Crown Prince, later Kaiser Frederick III, a liberal and social progressive, led to his premature, unnecessary death and ascendancy to the German throne of his mentally unbalanced, war monger son Kaiser Wilhelm II.

World War One

Tens of millions died as a result of the cataclysm that was World War One.

In identifying the cause of the war, some historians have pointed to the ever-escalating rivalry between the great European powers. Others assert it stemmed from an absence of major conflicts in Europe - small wars aside - for 100 years.

Still others cite France's seething desire for revenge since its humiliating defeat by Germany in 1870. Railway timetables, no less, have also been advanced as being a key factor.

The starter's gun for the 1914-18 conflict was the assassination, by 19 year old Serbian Gavrilo Princip, of the Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife, Sofia, in Sarajevo, on Saturday, June 28, 1914.

This led to Austria-Hungary's harsh and excessive ultimatum to Serbia. Then the intricate alliances and informal agreements across Europe came into play. Serbia's ally was Russia. Austria Hungary's ally was Germany. France had an agreement with Russia. Great Britain had pledged to protect Belgium's borders, and had an informal understanding with France that they would be allies.

Winston Churchill, later prime minister of Great Britain during the Second World War, was First Lord of the British Admiralty when World War One started.

He said three men were to blame for the outbreak of the war.⁽¹⁾ Assassin Princip, the Austro-Hungarian foreign minister who wrote the first ultimatum, and the German kaiser who could have stopped the chain reaction of governments bound by military alliances.

The last person cited by Churchill, Wilhelm II, is key to this research paper.

The actual cause of World War One, the genesis, were the events of 1871 and 1878.

Kaiser Wilhelm II

Friedrich Wilhelm Viktor Albert was born on January 27, 1859. The future king of Prussia and German emperor was the grandson of the then King Wilhelm I of Prussia and the son of Crown Prince Friedrich of Prussia.

Unlike his liberal minded father, Wilhelm gloried in the traditions of the Prussian army and entertained dreams of leading it to new triumphs.

A mishap at birth resulted in him having a shortened left arm.

Wilhelm was so afflicted by his under-developed arm that he developed a rigidity in the neck - which was treated by exercise - from apparently turning away from the imperfect limb.

He was to later suffer from an inner ear infection which many speculated had infected his brain. (2)

In Wilhelm's youth famed German chancellor Prince Otto von Bismarck had been his hero, however later, Wilhelm 'The Impetuous', as one historian has described him, would submit to the instruction of no one.

In 1890, Wilhelm 'dropped the pilot', in the famous phrase of Britain's Punch magazine, when the Iron Chancellor Bismarck, who had guided the German states to unification in 1871, retired.

Despite the existence of a freshly minted constitution, Germany was then in the hands of the unpredictable and unstable kaiser, of whom many said was mad.

At home, the 'All Highest', as he was referred to at court, chose ministers who would acquiesce easily to his wants and demands.

In foreign matters Wilhelm, set himself on a course of antagonizing other countries.

Wilhelm had a love/hate relationship with Britain, of which his beloved grandmother, Victoria, was the venerated Queen.

He hated her son, his Uncle Bertie, later England's King Edward VII. (3)

Incredibly, in an interview with London's Observer newspaper in 1908, Wilhelm said he 'loathed' Edward. (4)

One historian has written that 'the bad blood between Wilhelm and Edward VII was a major factor contributing to war in 1914.' (5)

Wilhelm competed with Britain to have the world's biggest and most powerful navy. Many commentators observed that Germany already had the strongest army in the world (6) and did not also need a world class navy, a direct threat to Britain.

The German Kaiser created a European zeitgeist, or atmosphere, of tension, peppered with a number of alarming incidents.

He gave an interview, for example, with Britain's Daily Telegraph in 1908 which proved so embarrassing that the Kaiser took to his bed for several days. (7)

Among other things, the kaiser said the German people, in general, do not care for the British, who are "mad, mad, mad as march hares". (8)

But there was worse to come.

England 'ought to be wiped out and the sooner the better'

In a later unpublished, but widely circulated, newspaper interview for the London Observer, Wilhelm said, incredibly, he 'loathed' Britain's King Edward VII, his uncle.

Wilhelm said, "England was rotten and marching to her ruin, and ought to be wiped out."

Germany was "ready for war at any moment with her and the sooner it came the better." (9)

He famously inscribed in 1891 in the Golden Book of the City of Munich *Suprema lex Regis voluntas* - 'The Royal Will is the Supreme Law'. (10)

This shocked many in Germany and much of Europe as it was a statement that was more the view of a medieval absolute king and despot, than a late 19th century constitutional monarch.

Such a statement was at odds with the German constitution which German Chancellor Otto von Prince Bismarck and others had forged some 20 years earlier.

Wilhelm's 1896 telegram of congratulations to President Kruger of the South African Republic on successfully suppressing the Jameson Raid by British colonial politician Leander Starr Jameson was a deliberate provocation to Britain.

Friedrich von Holstein, served as the head of the political department of the German Foreign Office for more than thirty years.

He told the British ambassador to German, Sir Edward Goschen, to speak to the Kaiser as you would 'a child or a fool'. (11)

More than once Holstein called for the emperor's removal, maintaining that he was mad.

The legendary German civil servant even went so far as to describe Kaiser Wilhelm as a 'psychopath'. (12)

One English commentator said that, 'no one, not even himself, could tell what the kaiser would say next' (13).

Even having appointed compliant, pliable ministers, Wilhelm's tactic, when meeting with these senior government officials, was often to walk up and down, do all the talking himself, and dismiss the ministers in twenty minutes (14).

In further diverse remarks aimed at destabilizing the geopolitical scene, Wilhelm from time to time, warned about the dangers of 'The Yellow Peril', meaning China and Japan. He ordered the Imperial court painter Knackfuss to produce a special artwork to illustrate this, in his mind, dire threat. (15).

The German emperor even once spoke of declaring war on the German people.

He told his minister von Hammerstein, 'If the south Germans want to spoil my plans, I shall simply declare war on them, Prussia has eighteen army corps, and they have only three or four, you'd soon see who would win'. (16).

Wilhelm described the five feet tall king of Italy, Victor Emmanuel III, as "a dwarf" in front of the king's entourage. He had a special nickname for the future Tsar of Bulgaria, Prince Ferdinand, which focussed on his big nose, and spread rumours he was a hermaphrodite. (17)

He told British prime minister Arthur Balfour, "whenever war occurs in any part of the world, we in Germany sit down and we make a plan." (18)

In what may have been a subtle reference to his mental instability, Bismarck said of Wilhelm, 'he wanted it always to be Sunday.' (19)

The 'All Highest's' own morning paper was provided for him, in a special imperial edition of one, made of carefully excerpted items from the world press, printed in gold. (20).

US 26th President Theodore Roosevelt called Wilhelm that 'autocratic zigzag'.

At one outburst from the Kaiser, Roosevelt remarked, "The Kaiser has had another fit. What a jumpy creature he is." (21)

Wilhelm's close friend and diplomat Philipp, Prince of Eulenburg, believed the kaiser was 'mentally unstable and prone to tell inexplicable lies'. (22)

In 1899 Prince Eulenburg said there moves at the very top of German society to compel the kaiser to abdicate (23).

In the early 1890s the kaiser's inept meddling in foreign affairs led to Russia making an alliance with Germany's western, hostile neighbor, France. This was exactly what was not needed for Germany's security. Making a reality of the intrinsic and atavistic fear within Germany of encirclement - Russia to the East, France to the West. (24)

It was said at the time that Bismarck, the master geopolitician, always concerned with maintaining the balance of power, would never have allowed Russia to become estranged from the German Reich (25).

After five years of bloody conflict in World War One, and the collapse of Germany's fighting efforts, Wilhelm was forced to abdicate in November 1918

and fled to Holland. He was to die in exile in Dorn, Holland, in 1941 aged 82.

Dr Morell MacKenzie and the events

In 1887 English doctor Morell Mackenzie was Europe's leading throat specialist, one of the founders of the Journal of Laryngology and Rhinology and British Rhino-Laryngological Association.

So eminent was his reputation that in May 1887, when the Crown Prince of Germany, heir to the German throne, was found to have a throat lesion, Mackenzie was summoned from England. (26)

The eminent German physicians who first attended the Crown Prince since the start of March - Karl Gerhardt, Adalbert Tobold, Ernst von Bergmann, among others - had diagnosed his ailment as cancer of the throat.

They recommended surgery. They said the surgical risk was low, the Crown Prince afterwards would be hoarse, but would have a voice.

They further stated that the lesion had been discovered early, Frederick was otherwise in good health and later 'would be able to command an army corps at a review'. (27)

The London-born Mackenzie, however, insisted, basing his judgement on a pathologist's microscopical examination, that the disease was not demonstrably cancerous, but rather a 'throat infection'.

He advised that an operation for the removal of the larynx, set down for the 21 May, was not warranted, and that the growth might well be a benign one and therefore curable by other treatment.

Despite the disquiet of the German doctors, Mackenzie's opinion was followed: the Crown Prince went to England for further treatment by the English specialist, and was present at his grandmother by marriage, Queen Victoria's Jubilee celebrations in June 1887. (28)

Mackenzie was knighted by Queen Victoria in September 1887 for his services and made a Grand Commander of the Royal House Order of Hohenzollern by a grateful German royal family.

In November, however, the German doctors were again called to attend the Crown Prince and it was confirmed that the disease was cancer.

Controversy then reigned with Mackenzie blaming the German doctors for causing the ailment to become malignant by their subsequent irritating treatment, after his original examination and diagnosis.

The Crown Prince became German Emperor on March 9, 1888 and died on June 15.

Over the last months of the new kaiser's life, a heated argument took place between Mackenzie and the German medical world. (29)

The German doctors published an account of the illness, to which Mackenzie replied with a work 'The Fatal Illness of Frederick the Noble (1888)', the publication of which resulted in him being criticized by the Royal College of Surgeons.

Mackenzie later published several books on laryngoscopy and diseases of the throat. He died suddenly in 1892, aged 54.

Kaiser Wilhelm blamed Mackenzie for the premature death of his father, as a result of what he believed was the doctor's medical ineptness (30).

By comparison, in 1893, at the start of his second term as US president, Grover Cleveland had a malignant lesion of the maxilla removed and a rubber prosthesis installed. The successful and competent performance of this risky upper mouth operation on the president saw him live another 15 years. (31)

The disastrous results of Mackenzie's incompetent diagnosis

On the death of Kaiser Frederick, his son, Wilhelm II, aged 29, became German Emperor.

Widely held to be mentally unbalanced, if not mad, Wilhelm was unstable, impetuous and blatantly militaristic. He gloried in the traditions of the Prussian army and entertained dreams of leading it to new triumphs. He would sometimes wear up to a dozen military uniforms a day (32), out of the 120 he owned (33).

In short, he was a war monger. The British press, notably Punch magazine, mocked him as the 'child Kaiser'. But a very dangerous one. (34)

The kaiser's close friend, Philip, Prince Eulenburg, described him as 'mentally unstable'. (35)

On becoming kaiser, Wilhelm set himself on a course of antagonizing other countries and threatening the stability of Europe. (36)

By comparison, Wilhelm's father Frederick was a liberal, a progressive in the language of today, and socially enlightened. (37)

As was his English wife, Vicky, the first born of Queen Victoria, who was admired for her intelligence, wisdom and a sense of social justice.

There also is an argument to say that Kaiser Frederick III would have appointed ministers who shared his liberal views and were more skilled at dealing with the complex European political structure than those, in the case of Wilhelm, who acquiesced easily to his wants and demands. (38)

Frederick would certainly not have become aligned, as Wilhelm did, with Germany's aggressive, nationalist, hard-right factions who embraced group think that a war in Europe was unavoidable and even necessary. (39)

Frederick and Victoria would have made for a very formidable liberal and socially enlightened monarchy at the head of the powerful German empire, the opposite of their son Wilhelm.

The chance of a liberal Germany was lost

There is compelling evidence to suggest that Kaiser Frederick and Kaiserin Victoria would have not allowed antagonism between Germany and the rest of Europe to continually intensify in the 15 to 25 years from 1888, culminating in the commencement of World War One in 1914.

A totally different geo-political atmosphere in Europe would have existed.

Wilhelm's father Kaiser Frederick fought valiantly in the Austro Prussian war of 1866 and the Franco Prussian war of 1870. Yet, he hated war, was respected outside of Germany, was regarded with deep affection by the German people (affectionately called 'Unser Fritz') and was a liberal, a progressive in the language of today. (40)

Winston Churchill's statement on the cause of the war, that the German kaiser could have stopped the chain reaction of governments bound by military

alliances, is especially relevant.

If Kaiser Frederick III had still been alive in 1914, the liberal sovereign would have not allowed the chain reaction of events, following the assassination of the Austrian archduke, that caused World War One.

The tragic shooting of Franz Ferdinand would have been more than likely viewed as just another dispute in the Balkans.

Kaiser Frederick III became kaiser in 1888 on the death of his 90 year-old father Wilhelm I.

Kaiser Wilhelm I was king of Prussia from 1861, then German emperor from 1871. This was 27 years as a reigning monarch.

His grandson, Kaiser Wilhelm II was German emperor for 30 years, until World War One forced his abdication in November 1918. He was to die in exile in Dorn, Holland, in 1841 aged 82.

On the basis that his father and son both reigned for over a quarter of a century, it is not unreasonable to assume that Kaiser Frederick, had his throat ailment not been incompetently diagnosed by Morell, could well have lived another 15 to 25 years, up until the eve of World War One.

If Wilhelm had have become Kaiser, say in 1913, at the age of 54, he would have been more mature, perhaps less militaristic and far less likely to have played the leading role in the cataclysm for Europe that was World War One, out of which stemmed the second disaster some 20 years later of World War Two.

Even if Kaiser Frederick had only lived another ten to 15 years, that would have been sufficient time to establish a strong liberal theme to German government policies, which would have arguably spread to its relations with the rest of Europe and Britain.

One doctor and history researcher has endorsed the idea that the longevity of Frederick's father and son portended well for Frederick enjoying many more years, if his life had not been cut short by the 'unnecessary' involvement of Morell Mackenzie. (41)

He writes that 'It is inconceivable that Germany would have gone down this warpath if the enlightened, reform-minded Kaiser Frederick had lived a normal

life span. In 1914 he would have been 82. His father had lived to 90, and Wilhelm II, the cause of it all, died in 1941 at the age of 82. Even if Frederick had not enjoyed quite the same longevity that characterized his family ... World War One would likely have never happened.' (42)

Could Wilhelm have been declared unfit to rule?

Another possible outcome is that, if his father had lived, Wilhelm's increasingly unstable behaviour over his adult years as Crown Prince would have seen him ultimately declared unfit to rule, and his son designated the heir to Kaiser Frederick III.

There was a precedent for replacing incapacitated Hohenzollerns.

In 1858 Wilhelm II's great uncle King Frederick William IV of Prussia had a regent appointed, his brother, after he suffered a stroke which rendered him mentally diminished. (43)

Historians have traditionally stated that King Frederick William IV of Prussia was replaced as monarch due to insanity, opening up the suggestion that, in the light of Wilhelm II, madness ran in the Hohenzollerns.

More recent studies have downplayed the overt insanity designation and concluded that a stroke caused his mind to become 'clouded'.

Ferdinand von Holstein was for 30 years head of the political department of the German foreign office. As previously stated, he told the British ambassador to Germany Sir Edward Goschen to speak to the kaiser as you would to a 'fool or a child'.(44) He told others Wilhelm was 'a psychopath'. (45)

Wilhelm's best friend diplomat Philip, Prince Eulenburg, spoke of the kaiser's 'mental instability'. He told the kaiser in 1899 there was talk, in high circles, of compelling him to abdicate. (46)

Others likened him to Bavaria's Ludwig II, the 'mad king', who drowned in 1886 in suspicious circumstances. (47)

In other royal circles, replacing monarchs who are mentally unstable is not uncommon. In 1952 Crown Prince Hussein of Jordan was named successor to his schizophrenic father King Talal (48)," Craig says.

Summary

If Europe's leading throat specialist Englishman Dr Morell MacKenzie had not incorrectly diagnosed in May 1887 the throat cancer of Crown Prince of Germany, later Kaiser Frederick III, he would not have died prematurely, and the history of Germany and Europe for the next 20 to 25 years and beyond would have been vastly different.

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