## Account for varying speeds and patterns of industrialisation across europe essay



The process of industrialisation that took place in Europe in the 19th century was a process that was to have repercussions on many levels: socially, demographically, politically, economically and historically. It marked the transition from the agrarian, regionally centred, military state, to the modern concept of the economic power that now defines global power balance – Pollard describes this as moving from a mercantile attitude to one more ' laissez faire' in approach.

Despite the undeniable importance of the changes industrialisation brought about, it was neither uniform nor unilateral, resulting in speeds and patterns that defined how industrialisation would effect the country in both the long and short term. The first country to embark on the process of industrialisation was Britain, between 1760 to 1830. It was this model that was later applied to other areas in Europe with relative success, but whereas the process of Industrialisation in Britain was borne of enterprise, becoming an organic and spontaneous movement, its replication across Europe was state motivated. This meant that countries were not necessarily conducive to industrialisation at the point of its introduction, leading to inconsistencies in both the speed at which industries could be adapted, and the pattern in which it occurred. More economically advanced countries, such as Britain, France and Germany, with overseas empires, and rapidly expanding populations could initiate a mass market of production, whereas more insular, divided states often lacked the necessary cohesion for industrialisation. Karl Marx identified the pattern that emerged from these characteristics as one where more developed countries moved towards industrialisation, and the relatively economically backward followed their

Page 3

lead, (as best as cultural differences could allow). The reason for this may be that, " the industrially more developed country presents to the less developed country a picture of the latter's future" 1. The fact that by 1870, the UK held 31.

8% of European manufacturing ptoduction, closely followed by the other world powers of France (10. 3%) and Germany (13. 2%) shows that these competitive, economically expanding, cohesive states were the first and most effective at adopting industrialisation. This is a contrast to the less developed states of Italy and Russia who covered only 2. 4% and 3. 7% respectively, and who were following the lead, much as the pattern Marx identified demonstrates. Geschenkron further consolidates this pattern in the hypothesis that, " very significant interspatial variations in the process of industrialisation are functionally related to the economic backwardness that prevailed in the countries ..

. at the eve of their ' great spurts' of industrialisation" 2. This, to some extent, explains the pattern of industrialisation, attributing it to economic causes, but how did this disparity in the pattern of adopting industrial processes occur? The four determinant factors that dictated which countries would take up industrialisation are largely reliant on the state of the country at the time, i. e. the productive structures, organisational structures, and the spirit or ideology, which all contributed to the most pivotal factor; the speed at which industrialisation could be effectively applied. More often than not, the countries less effective in adopting industrial methods were lacking in these, due to the application of institutional instruments, which could either inhibit of prohibit effective development and slow down the process of https://assignbuster.com/account-for-varying-speeds-and-patterns-ofindustrialisation-across-europe-essay/

Page 4

industrialisation. By these criteria, European states can be categorised into those developed in these areas, therefore serving to initiate the process, such as Britain, and those whose structures could not necessarily accommodate such complete and fundamental change – hence the pattern of industrialisation. However, the speed at which the state could convert could have been the most crucial.

Technological change served to lower costs and prices, allowing industry to expand both at home and abroad - after all, Europe was a competitive, commercial world, and adaptation was vital to maintain a position in the market. This was the essence of industrialisation, and why British colonial supremacy was so dominant for so long; it was not only the first, but the fastest state to become industrialised. It may have been the first, but why did Industrialisation begin in Britain, and why was it so rapid? Among the most vital reasons is the location of natural resources to build and power the emerging machinery. Their accessibility is completely determinant in the shape that industry can take, affecting the rate of progress regionally within Britain as well as internationally in Europe. Cheap and plentiful coal, was in large supply and of unlimited value to industry in Britain, and its transport to areas such as London, with no natural supplies, was supported by the Mercantile Marine, this system of coastal transport helping to eventually sustain and co-ordinate industry once it was established. Other minerals responsible for industrial concentrations and developments were copper, tin, lead, salt and fireclay, as well as water, which provided power along the Pennines, N. Wales, and the West Midlands. The Industrial Revolution was

primarily a technological process, endeavouring to enable mass production

of these raw materials for the rapidly expanding population.

Technology was therefore the key focus, and in the development of crucial machinery such as the Newcomen steam engine in 1712, Britain was fundamentally changed the production of commodities to survive in a modern, competitive market. Subsequent developments such as the Open Hearth furnace in 1866 meant that the machinery itself could be refined, further increasing its effectiveness and market output. Combined, these two developments in particular affected every conceivable area of industry, especially that of transport, eventually meaning that not just the ideas that surfaced could be taken abroad, but the machines themselves, often serving to speed up the process of industrialisation. Britain therefore had the resources and methods of production, but political and social environment was of equal importance. What made the British Industrial revolution unique was the fact that it was an organic, spontaneous process, and not initiated by the state. The state was, if anything a negative force, except in protecting and setting a context which favoured the growth of certain industries, such as linen, silk, paper, cotton, and shipbuilding, all of which were involved with, and advanced by the industrial revolution. However, in the pre-industrial period, the state did serve to help the process, pouring large resources into encouraging new skills and indigenous enterprise - resulting in the spontaneity of the enterprising individuals who initiated the industrial revolution. Despite this, the state could act to put obstacles in the way of transition, such as the Bubble Act of 1720, prohibiting company flotation and publicly raised capital in the manufacturing industry.

Economic dislocation was encouraged as a result of the Corn Laws (1815-1842), and Settlement laws prevented a move of workers from agriculture to industry. However, none of these could draw away from the fact that the British Empire was the largest free-trade area in the world, supported by Naval protection, and greatly complementing the changes brought about by industrialisation. Not only this, but by the 18th century, Britain had moved away from serfdom to become a politically unified, and generally cohesive state; all attributes that Gerschenkron maintains can only serve to aid industrialisation. It was therefore, the combination of enterprise, location, resources, methods of production and government policies helped to initiate, and speed up the process of industrialisation. In contrast to the swift adoption of the industrial processes in Britain, Russia was an entirely different state, resulting in a large difference in the speed at which it became industrialised. Perversely, with such a large population, and such vast natural resources, Russia had the potential to become the great industrial nation of Europe, but this was not realised until the 1930's, under Stalin's industrial plans. In the 18th century, under Peter the Great, a small amount of forced industrialisation took place, largely as a result of Peter's frequent wars. The need for armaments and related industries built upon existing strengths, such as food processing, textiles, metallurgy, and mining (of which mining) and textiles accounted for 60% of the value of net production of large scale industrial enterprises).

These industries previously existed in urban handicraft workshops and peasant dwellings, but Russia had large reserves of minerals such as iron ore, copper, tin and lead. Therefore, Russia's industrial conversion was centred around the factory production of armaments; Zaozorskaya putting the number of new plants founded in Peter's reign as 178 (although this is a disputed number). Peter established important new centres of mining and metallurgy in the Ural Mountains, as well as general industry in the Moscow region and a new centre of manufacture in St. Petersburg. These are impressive achievements, but at the same time, Falkus mentions that this forced industrialisation also produced a retardation of industry, as it was also under Peter that serfdom was strengthened. Crippling taxation, such as the Poll Tax introduced in 1716, meant industrialisation occurred at the cost of internal purchasing power, and consequently at that of spontaneous development of internal demand. Effectively, what slowed industrial development in Russia was therefore government policy and intervention. Serf emancipation did not occur until 1861, leaving almost 75% of the population living at subsistence level in an agrarian society.

This left a dearth of investment, leaving investors to come in from either abroad, or the minute merchant class. Manorial factories had evolved from this, relying on serf labour, and any new factories were usually sold to foreign investors, serving to undermine spontaneous development, and internal purchasing power and demand; crucial aspects to effective and fast industrialisation. Not only this, but structurally, Russia was not in a position to accommodate industrialisation, and the industrial structure was almost entirely fashioned to state requirements with Peter's wars and foreign investment as the principal driving force. It was not only the industrial structure that lacked, but transport systems and communication (the only cross connection being the Trans-Siberian Railway) were so underdeveloped in such a vast country that there was no cohesion to industrialisation – no progression from regional development. Russia's development was therefore painfully slow, and by 1914 and the outbreak of World War 1, it was at a great disadvantage to the rest of Europe, industrially unable to cope with the strains of war upon its industry and economy, leading to collapse into revolution in 1917. Britain and Russia are two extremes within Europe of varying speeds of industrialisation, but they are also representative of how different political, social, and economic circumstances could alter a country's industrial development. The speed of industrialisation, reliant on these factors, in turn dictates the pattern which industrialisation adopted in Europe; in which order certain types of countries took on industrial methods of production. Therefore it is these criteria that dictated the form of the Industrial Revolution in Europe, accounting for differences internationally, after all, no state was exactly alike, and all were at different stages in their development.

What is clear from this, however, was that industrialisation was by no means unilateral, and that this small process had big consequences throughout Europe, no matter the speed or pattern that it took.