

lich, daß die seit 1871 bestehende politisch-militärische Konstellation und deren Perzeption durch die führenden Akteure der kontinentaleuropäischen Großmächte — die die dort festgelegte Einbahnstraße der Bündnisse schließlich (vor allem nach 1890) zur Sackgasse haben werden lassen — letztlich die Grundlinie eingezogen haben, an der entlang die internationalen Beziehungen in Europa bis 1914 verlaufen sind. Wohlgemerkt: Es geht nicht darum, die Probleme der industriewirtschaftlichen Entwicklung sowie deren Ungleichmäßigkeiten und Ungleichzeitigkeiten innerhalb und zwischen den europäischen Staaten aus der Analyse der internationalen Beziehungen auszublenden, sondern sie in den jeweiligen allgemeinen Kontext und in der angemessenen Größenordnung einzupassen. In der neueren Industrialisierungsforschung ist stärker als bisher deutlich geworden, daß z. B. die Leitsektorenfunktion, die der Eisenbahnbau als Vehikel der Industrialisierung in großen Teilen West- und Mitteleuropas gehabt hat, in Rußland ganz andere Wirkungen ausgelöst hat, weil er nicht nur vorhandene Gewerbe und Industrien in bestimmten Regionen behindert oder gar zerstört, sondern das Land in jene tiefe Verschuldung getrieben hat, die es seit den 1870er Jahren von der Stimmung an den internationalen Kapitalmärkten zeitweise besonders abhängig gemacht hat. Dies stimmt teilweise mit Müller-Links Beweisführung überein. Aber: Die übergroße Hast, mit der dort der Eisenbahnbau betrieben wurde, wie auch die Linienführung des Eisenbahnnetzes waren nicht die eigendynamischen Folgen einer wirtschaftlichen Entwicklungslogik. Diese Momente haben die Entwicklung eher gehemmt. Vielmehr dominierte dabei die politisch-militärische Logik der Herrschaftssicherung im Inneren und der Ausdehnung im Südwesten, Süden, Südosten und Osten.

Auch diese imperialen Herrschaftsmotivationen gehörten in das europäische Beziehungssystem im Zeitalter der Industrialisierung, über deren deutsch-russischen Sektor die Studie von Müller-Link eine Reihe wichtiger neuer Ergebnisse bringt. Hartmut Soell

Society and Politics in Wilhelmine Germany, edited by Richard J. Evans, Croom Helm Ltd., London, Barnes and Noble Books, New York 1978, pp. 305, £ 8.95.

This book is a sign that German History is gradually emerging from under the shadow of Nazism. It is a collection of essays by a group of young British historians intent upon rehabilitating the German past, in particular Wilhelmine Germany. For decades the pre-Nazi age has been subordinated to National Socialism. Even before the successful marketing of the Holocaust tragedy in the last few years, scholars were stunned, fascinated and obsessed with the evil which Nazism unleashed. Their understandable difficulty in coming to terms with the years 1933-45 has, however, prevented a detached, objective analysis of pre-Nazi Germany. Too often historians have looked back over their shoulders, possessed by the knowledge that 1933, World War II and Auschwitz were coming. Too often the assumption has been that Nazism was the culmination of the German political and cultural heritage. Evans and his colleagues seek to redress this imbalance. Their goal is to study Imperial Germany not as a forerunner of Nazism but on its own terms.

In the introduction, the *editor* explains why the contributors are well-equipped to rehabilitate the Wilhelmine age. The majority are too young to have experienced the trauma of the war years. One might thus assume that they are relatively free of those emotions which have burdened previous generations. Secondly, their nationality is claimed as an advantage. Nazism was a German not a British phenomenon. German scholars bear the psychological burden of this fact, while British historians are more free to develop a new orthodoxy. Thirdly, Evans and colleagues share a training in British universities which has encouraged them to take a critical stance towards the »new orthodoxy« of West German historiography. Whereas, in the opinion of the editor, German historians, even the younger generation, tend

to approach politics from above, the British have stressed the value of local history and have allowed for greater regional variety.

The introductory essay provides a valuable discussion of British and West German approaches to the German past; it also gives the book a coherence and unity which would otherwise not be evident. It is essential to the book.

The contributors to this collective work offer a new picture of the reality of the recent German past. *T. Cole* elaborates upon the well-known differences of opinion within the imperial government, particularly between Chancellor Bülow and the Kaiser. *R. Owen* questions the validity of the concept of »organized capitalism«, specifically the claim of evenhanded cooperation between the imperial government and industrialists like Krupp. Both essays point out significant disunity among the governing elites. Lack of consensus at the top was matched by a significant degree of diversity and independence on the part of Germany's regions and minority groups.

*R. Lenman* and *I. Farr* report on Bavaria. Both emphasise the influence of petty-bourgeois groups, radical and conservative but free of the manipulative elites residing in Berlin. In one of the better essays in the book *D. Blackbourn* examines the Center Party. Until 1912, it was the most diverse and successful political party in Imperial Germany. It has frequently been criticized for being opportunistic. Blackbourn argues that the party became increasingly subject to pressure from the mass of its supporters. In order to facilitate Catholic desires to be treated as equals by their Protestant fellow countrymen, the party had to change the status quo. It became reformist.

Reform of German society was also the aim of German women. *Evans* persuasively and justifiably gives prominence to the awakening of German women — »one of the great social issues of the day« and a subject largely ignored by the historical profession. Political activation of this important minority was tremendously significant; its full impact has yet to be appreciated.

Like Farr, Blackbourn and Evans, *G. Eley* explores and points to the significance of the politicization of the German masses. During the reign of William II, significant numbers of Germans joined a variety of organisations which pursued specific political goals. Generally these pressure groups have been considered as the »transparent fronts of traditional ruling interests and the ciphers of an unchanging authoritarian tradition« (p. 125). Eley challenges this interpretation. For him the pressure groups are »the organic expressions of a powerful and variegated movement of popular protest« (p. 125). They forced the established political institutions to adjust to the new techniques of mass agitation. Instead of being used to maintain the status quo, their willful independence changed German politics, particularly German conservatism, which in turn helped to prepare the way for fascism. In the decade before World War I German society became increasingly politicized and radicalized. Fascism became possible because the much vaunted elites found it progressively difficult to keep the lid on the boiling cauldron of German politics. This argument, which is central to the book, provides a fascinatingly different but plausible perspective on the German problem.

The remaining three essays concentrate on the German working class movement. *S. Hickey's* case study of the miners in the Ruhr brings to light »the divisions and contradictions within working class society« (p. 237). *A. Hall* looks at some aspects of the relationship between the SPD youth movement and the party establishment. *D. Geary* effectively challenges »the theory of integration and embourgeoisement« (p. 276) of the German labor movement.

As a whole, the collection is uneven. Some of the essays such as those of Cole, Owen, Lenman, Hickey and Hall provide useful information but few surprises and little in the way of provocative interpretations. They provide essential building blocks but no new architectural plans. The most valuable contributions are those of Farr, Blackbourn, Eley, Evans and Geary because, more so than the others, they contribute to the core of this collective reinter-

pretation of the Wilhelmine age. They stress the spontaneous and independent political activism of the German masses. We are reasonably familiar with the politicization of the German working class through the union movement and the SPD. What is new is the complementary claim that other significant minorities in Germany became politically conscious and active and changed German politics prior to 1914. Peasants, artisans, women, the petty bourgeoisie all developed wills and goals of their own. The simplistic concept of the unpolitical German being cleverly manipulated by precapitalist elites has been laid to rest.

*Society and Politics in Wilhelmine Germany* brings together some of the latest suggestive scholarship. It demonstrates the vitality, complexity and confusion of Imperial Germany. It was a fascinating era but in no way a dress-rehearsal for National Socialism. Juergen Doerr

Fritz Stern, Gold und Eisen. Bismarck and sein Bankier Bleichröder, Ullstein-Verlag, Berlin 1978, pp. 754, clothbound, 68 DM.

Stern has fulfilled two expectations with this book. He has presented a superbly written study which reads well even in the German translation. In addition, he has supplemented his earlier views on Imperial Germany's illiberal and anti-Semitic nature. These two aspects dominate the study, perhaps to the extent that historical analysis is sacrificed to telling an interesting story and to overemphasizing the German Jew as victim.

The information in this study adds much to understanding Germany's past. The fortunes of the Bleichröder family, on whom and what they depended, are outlined for the first time. The financing of Bismarck's personal fortune in keeping with the 19th century concept of conflict of interest — to let nothing conflict with one's interests — is demonstrated. The financing of Prussia's wars of the 1860s is more fully presented than previously. The close relations between Bismarck and his private banker, confidant and useful parvenu are detailed on the basis of private letters and other novel archival materials. If Bismarck appears more life-like and the dominant personality it reflects the two men's relationship according to Stern.

Not the fine lines of the two giants which Stern presents but rather the larger picture should be questioned. Can a present-day historian really claim that »Ihr Leben, ihre Karrieren sind für das Wesen und den Betrieb der neuen Gesellschaft instruktiv, deren repräsentative Persönlichkeiten sie waren«? (12-13) Whereas Brecht might have asked whether one cook had accompanied Caesar, we might ask whether Bebel and Bassermann were not also representative, or Börsig and Bernstorff or Bernhardi and ... to mention only socialist labour, political liberalism, heavy industry, state bureaucracy and the military as representative groups in addition to Stern's two categories of political-aristocratic and financial-Semitic. The role of labour in particular suggests that Stern's rich Jew, who was excluded from a few salons but who helped shape an empire which systematically stigmatized a whole class, can hardly be considered as excluded from German society and power in the fashion Stern would have us believe. The relationship between Germans and Jews in Imperial Germany is presented without any of the subtleties which Peter Gay has brought to this subject. Similarly, the monied interests' influence on politics is denied whereas the evidence presented on that issue leaves the question open. The type of lobbying which the Ballins, Bosches or Bleichröders undertook by direct and indirect means is partly revealed by the mere fact that the politicians moved almost exclusively in those circles.

Stern's enjoyable style, his thorough research and his control over extensive material are in contrast to his one-sided approach to Imperial Germany's history, even as a corrective to previous historians' overconcern with Bismarck.

D. K. Buse