
Review: From Hitler to Bismarck: 'Third Reich' and Kaiserreich in Recent Historiography:
Part II

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FROM HITLER TO BISMARCK: 'THIRD REICH' AND KAISERREICH IN RECENT HISTORIOGRAPHY: PART II

Krieg und Kriegsrisiko: Zur deutschen Politik im Ersten Weltkrieg: Aufsätze. By Egmont Zechlin. Düsseldorf: Droste, 1979. Pp. 378. DM 48.

Germany in the Age of Total War: Essays in Honour of Francis Carsten. Edited by Volker R. Berghahn and Martin Kitchen. London: Croom Helm, 1981. Pp. 266. £13.95.

The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism, 1860–1914. By Paul M. Kennedy. London: Allen and Unwin, 1980. Pp. xiv + 604. £27.50.

Reshaping the German Right: Radical Nationalism and Political Change after Bismarck. By Geoff Eley. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1980, Pp. xii + 387. £15.

The Collapse of the Weimar Republic: Political Economy and Crisis. By David Abraham. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981. Pp. xiv + 366. £16.70.

Die deutsche Inflation 1912–1923: Ursachen und Folgen in internationaler Perspektive. By Carl-Ludwig Holtfrerich. West Berlin: De Gruyter, 1980. Pp. x + 360. DM 98.

Bayern in der NS-Zeit. Vol. I: *Soziale Lage und politisches Verhalten der Bevölkerung im Spiegel vertraulicher Berichte.* Ed. Martin Broszat, Elke Fröhlich, Falk Wiesemann. Munich: Oldenbourg, 1977. Pp. 712. DM 38. Vol. II: *Herrschaft und Gesellschaft im Konflikt, Teil A.* Ed. Martin Broszat and Elke Fröhlich. Munich: Oldenbourg, 1979. Pp. xxv + 515. DM 38. Vol. III: *Herrschaft und Gesellschaft im Konflikt, Teil B.* Ed. Martin Broszat, Elke Fröhlich, Anton Grossmann. Munich: Oldenbourg, 1981. Pp. 696. DM 38. Vol. IV: *Herrschaft und Gesellschaft im Konflikt, Teil C.* Ed. Martin Broszat, Elke Fröhlich, Anton Grossmann. Munich: Oldenbourg, 1981. Pp. 760. DM 38.

Nationalsozialistische Eroberung der Provinzpresse. Gleichschaltung, Selbstanpassung und Resistenz in Bayern. By Norbert Frei. Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1980. Pp. 363. DM 32.

The Holocaust and the German Elite: Genocide and National Suicide in Germany 1871–1945. By Rainer C. Baum. London: Croom Helm, 1981. Pp. ix + 374. £19.95.

Town in the Ruhr: A Social History of Bochum 1860–1914. By David F. Crew. New York: Columbia University Press, 1979. Pp. xiii + 269. \$25.

The Politics of Ethnic Survival: Germans in Prague 1861–1914. By Gary C. Cohen. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981. Pp. xviii + 344. £19.30.

III

In the first part of this review article¹ I suggested a number of parallels between recent work on Hitler's 'Third Reich' and recent interpretations of Imperial Germany. Some scholars have opted for the biographical approach, especially where – as in the case of Röhl and Sombart's collection on Kaiser Wilhelm II² – they seek the explanation of the course of German history in the character and ideas of the individuals at the top. Others have advocated what I call a 'structuralist' approach, emphasizing the role of the structure of the decision-making apparatus of government in generating policy. A major controversy is raging between these two points of view in the historiography of the 'Third Reich';³ with the appearance of the Röhl and Sombart volume, it seems destined to extend itself backwards to historiography of the Kaiserreich as well. Here, as the recent republication, mostly unaltered (though with two new contributions on the subject), of the essays of the senior Hamburg historian Egmont Zechlin on this subject indicates, older positions, with their emphasis on the primacy of diplomatic relations, die hard. Yet on the whole it is the 'structuralist' approach which has made the running in recent years. Some time ago, Wolfgang Mommsen advocated what he called a 'functional-structural approach' that took into account the institutional processes of decision-making involved in the decision to go to war in 1914;⁴ he returns to this topic in a new contribution to a collection of essays presented to Professor Francis Carsten on his seventieth birthday. This collection is as varied as *Festschriften* usually are, though unfortunately it provides little concrete reflection of Carsten's importance as an interpreter of the overall course of German history as well as a writer on the twentieth century. Mommsen's contribution focuses on the role of public opinion. It concentrates on the uncontrollable nationalist pressure groups that emerged in the 1890s and had achieved enormous influence by the eve of the war, in persuading Bethmann Hollweg and others in the leadership of the Reich that war was inevitable. Mommsen is only one of a number of German scholars who have argued in recent years that the German decision to go to war was made in a desperate bid to escape the insoluble domestic problems which the Reich was facing by 1914. The political process seemed as paralysed in 1912–14 as it did in 1929–33. The forces blocking credible solutions to the various crises – financial, constitutional and diplomatic – which the Reich confronted seemed overwhelming. The gradual fragmentation of the decision-making process, with the chancellor, the army, the navy and the Foreign Office all pursuing mutually contradictory policies and the Kaiser completely unable to weld them all into a coherent whole, generated its own tension and dynamic. Finally, if the rulers of the Empire were to regain the initiative and prevent the Social Democrats from exploiting their election victory of 1912 to force major constitutional changes, then a war seemed the gamble most likely to pay off.

The view that the decision to go to war in 1914 was the result of cumulative

¹ *Historical Journal*, xxvi (1983), no. 2, 485–97.

² J. C. G. Röhl and Nicolaus Sombart (eds.), *Kaiser Wilhelm II: new interpretations* (Cambridge, 1982), discussed in Part I of this review article.

³ Summarized in several of the contributions to G. Hirschfeld and L. Kettenacker (eds.), *The 'Führer state': myth and reality: studies on the structure and politics of the Third Reich* (Stuttgart, 1981), discussed in Part I of this review article.

⁴ Wolfgang J. Mommsen, 'Domestic factors in German foreign policy before 1914', *Central European History*, vi (1973), no. 1, 3–43.

political, economic and social pressures in Germany has now been given magisterial and comprehensive treatment in Paul Kennedy's massive new study on *The rise of the Anglo-German antagonism 1860-1914*. The core of Kennedy's book is an old-style narrative diplomatic history, based on an impressive mastery not only of a wide range of printed material but also of unpublished sources in some sixty archives. This hard narrative core is surrounded by a softer pulp of analysis in which the author deals with broader influences on relations between the two countries. Finally, to round it all off, there is an attempt at a general comparison between the socio-economic and political structures of the two countries, the equivalent of a rather thin layer of pith and peel. Thus Kennedy's study is much more than a traditional diplomatic history; it also involves a highly ambitious attempt at a comparative history of two different nations. On one level, the work can be used simply as a handbook. If you want to find out what the *Sheffield Telegraph* thought of the prospects of an Anglo-German alliance, or why the Tübingen school of theology aroused such anger in England, or which British historians backed Bismarck in the Franco-Prussian War, or whether the German government's manipulation of the press was as subtle and gentlemanly as the methods used by the English, or who belonged to the Anglo-German friendship society, or whether the Catholic Centre Party approved of the Kruger telegram, then this is the place to look. The mass of detailed information, the comprehensive range of Professor Kennedy's scholarship, the staggering industry of his researches, the sheer weight of his learning, are all tremendously impressive. Equally impressive is the clarity of structure and style with which all this information is presented. There can be no doubt that if anyone wants to start investigating the problem of Anglo-German relations before 1914, they must now start by reading this book.

Kennedy is essentially a synthesizer; his achievement – and it is a very considerable one – is to have combed the archives and libraries for every scrap of paper relevant to Anglo-German relations in this period and to have brought it all together in an orderly and readable form between the covers of one book. The central diplomatic narrative must surely now be regarded as definitive. Inevitably, however, weaknesses begin to creep in at the more general levels of analysis. Where Kennedy has real, first-hand expertise, as in the question of colonial rivalries, he is not afraid to engage with and criticize existing interpretations.⁵ In dealing with non-diplomatic aspects of Anglo-German relations, and especially in questions of domestic affairs, he is more inclined to rely on the work of others. Thus he accepts virtually without question arguments about the 'refounding' of the Reich in 1878-9, the 'alliance of rye and iron', Wilhelm II's achievement of 'personal rule' by 1897 and many other theses of recent historiography. As we have already seen,⁶ these are the subject of sharp controversy, and should not simply be accepted. On occasion indeed he falls into error on such matters; for instance, he seems to think that Bavarian Peasant Leagues were part of the German Conservative party (pp. 348-50) and his account of the German Labour movement, which confuses revisionism with reformism and implies that collective bargaining was widespread in Germany before 1914, is frankly unsatisfactory. The broadest level of comparison, between the overall social and political structure and development of the two countries, is weak; it generally appears only in the margin, and has not been given the thought and attention accorded to the more detailed empirical research.

⁵ Cf. Paul M. Kennedy, *The Samoan tangle: a study in Anglo-German-American relations 1878-1890* (Dublin, 1974).

⁶ See Part I above, pp. 491-3.

Moreover, despite the book's exemplary clarity of presentation, it is none the less dogged by serious structural problems. To begin with, it is hard to see why Kennedy devotes such lengthy attention to aspects of Anglo-German relations which he concludes were only of minor importance, such as the political parties up to 1880 or the development of cultural and religious contacts. The relatively even-handed treatment of all these various topics contributes in no small measure to the book's excessive length. Then again, Kennedy (like Braudel) does not always relate his three levels of analysis to one another very well. It is all very fine to say Germany's massive economic growth in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries was the determining factor in the rise of the Anglo-German antagonism; but how or why it should have led to war with Britain requires more systematic analysis and explanation than it receives in this book. Many different explanations, embodying rival theories of the relationship of the economic and the political, have after all been advanced over the years; one would like to have seen them systematically assessed, even at the expense of some of the empirical material. Finally, the problem of how the war actually came about is sidestepped by the conclusion that it was more or less inevitable by 1906 anyway; indeed, the crucial years up to 1914 are relegated to a brief afterword. It may be true – as the author says – that there is little more to be discovered about international relations in these years. Yet one cannot suppress a certain feeling of disappointment that he has chosen not to extend to this final period – the outcome of which was surely a good deal less predictable than he claims – the comprehensively researched treatment which he has devoted to the earlier history of Anglo-German diplomacy.

All this amounts to the fact that although Professor Kennedy's book revises previous accounts of his subject on innumerable secondary and minor issues, he has not used his prodigious archival labours to produce any really significant revision of our picture of Anglo-German relations in the crucial period of their estrangement (i.e. from about the turn of the century onwards). His account of the less well-known earlier period is more innovative; but of course, as he points out, this period was not particularly significant in the history of the rise of Anglo-German antagonism. In the account of the later period, the centrality of the naval building programme to Anglo-German antagonism is restated (its repercussions on diplomacy are persuasively dated a year or two earlier than convention usually agrees). The influence of public opinion on foreign policy – a commonplace of diplomatic history – is emphasized through a very thorough survey of the press, through a briefer account of the rise of nationalist pressure groups and through careful allusions to these in the course of the diplomatic narrative. Kennedy usefully notes that there was much more cohesion in the 'collective mind' formed by Tirpitz, his junior staff, Reventlow, Schäfer, Bassermann, and the Pan-Germans – formed that is, by people *in* and *out* of government – than there was in the perceptions of all those within that 'legally recognisable but politically mythical boundary which divided officialdom from everyone else' (p. 433). In the end, however, this insight leads him to reproduce the conventional wisdom that Germany's foreign aggressiveness was the outcome of 'domestic-political tensions, a flawed decision-making structure, undue deference to the military and excessive nationalism' (p. 454). Ultimately, he suggests, the rise of German economic power was the root of the antagonism, not because of the influence of capitalists on government (a topic to which he pays insufficient attention in the book) but because it made Germany the strongest state in Europe. The social consequences of economic growth, 'especially the growth of an industrial working class', and the mobilization of an increasingly discontented *Mittelstand* in extreme

nationalist organizations which put pressure on the government to overturn the international *status quo*, Kennedy concludes,

tempted beleaguered elites in Germany to seek a solution in overseas expansion and, when later frustrated by their failure to gain 'a place in the sun', to repeat the Bismarckian tactic of solving domestic questions by a foreign war: which, given the operational efficiency planning of the army, meant a westward military drive and a probable clash with the British (p. 466).

Curiously, therefore, Kennedy's emphasis on the dynamic factor in the rise of the Anglo-German antagonism – the growth of German industrial power – conceals a deeper emphasis on the static factors which (he argues) translated that power into arms spending and foreign aggression: the persistence of pre-industrial elites, the tradition of Prussian militarism, the hankering after a repeat performance of Bismarck's conquests of 1864–71, and the flawed decision-making structure of the German State.

IV

For all his concern to avoid controversy, Kennedy thus takes his stand with the many historians who have argued that Germany's political sins, from the launching of the First World War through the collapse of the Weimar Republic to the triumph of Hitler, can all be ascribed, in greater or lesser degree, to the struggle of outmoded ruling elites against the political consequences of industrial modernity, democracy and parliamentarianism. In this struggle, it is often argued, the old elites (landowners, army officers, bureaucrats and Prussian nobility) co-opted and 'feudalized' the industrial bourgeoisie. They successfully manipulated the urban and rural petty-bourgeoisie into support for nationalist and backward-looking politics. And they weaned the proletariat away from an active policy of socialist democratization. In recent years, however, this argument has come increasingly under attack. Three major weaknesses have become apparent in it. First, it portrays too static a picture of German history and does not sufficiently allow for social and political change. Secondly, it ascribes too much to the manipulative wizardry of the political elites and neglects the independent effect on the political system of the allegedly manipulated groups in German society. Thirdly, it exaggerates the extent to which the ruling groups in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century German society were 'feudal' or 'pre-industrial' or 'traditional' in their outlook at a time when Germany was already a highly industrialized capitalist economy.

As the discussion of Margaret Anderson's biography of Windthorst in the first part of this article indicated, the conventional view that Bismarck's turn to conservatism in 1878 set German politics in a mould which was not completely broken until 1945, has increasingly been challenged by the argument that it was the 1890s that witnessed the real turning-point of modern German history, with the entry of the masses on to the political scene.⁷ The political mobilization of the masses found its expression in the foundation of a staggering variety of new organizations. Many of these had a noticeable impact on the political parties or the Reichstag and ultimately on the whole process of political decision-making.⁸ Geoff Eley's *Reshaping the German*

⁷ See the discussion in Part I above, pp. 491–3.

⁸ Studies along these lines include a number of the essays collected in Richard J. Evans (ed.), *Society and politics in Wilhelmine Germany* (London, 1978), and especially David Blackbourn, *Class, religion and local politics in Wilhelmine Germany: the Centre party in Württemberg before 1914* (London, 1980).

Right is ostensibly a study of one group of these new organizations, the radical nationalist societies. But it is in reality far more than that. Eley uses his subject to launch a frontal attack on a whole range of orthodoxies in recent social-liberal German historiography, from the theory of 'social imperialism' to the manipulative model of political mobilization.⁹ The book is bursting at the seams with ideas, packed with novel and arresting hypotheses; one comes away from it feeling intellectually punch-drunk. Eley has something new and surprising to say on almost everything he touches upon; he has written the kind of book to which one wants to return again and again. This makes it impossible to do the book justice in a brief space. More serious, perhaps, it is ultimately rather confusing, as in the maze of original ideas and interpretations one can too easily lose sight of the underlying argument. Matters are not helped by the book's complex language and abstract terminology, which make it difficult to recommend to students below graduate level. Moreover, the book's structure is rather chaotic; it should perhaps have been outlined in the preface and could have done with some reorganization. Unsettling and unfamiliar ideas demand particularly clear and ordered exposition. Eley has not really done enough to provide it.

It is also all too easy in the course of the book to lose sight of the extent to which Eley shares many of the views of those he criticizes. Until the 1890s, he remarks, Wilhelmine politics was dominated by a 'central contradiction':

namely the persistence of a state structure guaranteeing the historic privileges of a landowning interest, at a time when the capitalist transformation of German society, the diminishing role of agriculture in the economy and the antagonism of capital and labour were all demanding an adaptation of that state to an entirely novel situation (p. 349).

In the 1890s the end of the Anti-Socialist Law, the growth of the SPD, the emergence of the mass media, the spread of local railway networks, and many other changes helped to bring about a broadening of the political nation, as peasants, *Mittelstand* and workers all in their different ways underwent a process of political mobilization. Simultaneously, from the end of the 'Great Depression' in 1896 the 'power bloc' of 'iron and rye' entered a long-term crisis as the Junkers' privileges in the Reich came under threat. A symptom of this crisis, and of the increasing need of the dominant classes to appeal to the newly mobilized masses, was the emergence of the nationalist pressure-groups. These showed clear populist, anti-governmental radical nationalist tendencies, though as yet such tendencies were held in check. The collapse of the Bülow Block over the refusal of landowners to tolerate the reform of the Reich's financial system, and the elections of 1912, were major defeats for the ruling 'power bloc'. They obliged the government to work more closely than ever with political parties in the Reichstag. In doing so, they forced the old right to join in a broader coalition with the radical nationalists, the 'national opposition' of the *Kartell der schaffenden Stände*. This was one of a series of increasingly broadly based and increasingly radical movements of the right. Via the Fatherland Party of 1917 and the DNVP in the early Weimar years, these culminated in the emergence of National Socialism. All were attempts by one faction or group of factions within the

⁹ Cf. Eley's earlier articles on these themes, especially 'Defining social imperialism: use and abuse of an idea', *Social History*, 1, no. 3 (1976), 265-90; 'Sammlungspolitik, Social Imperialism and the Navy Law of 1898', *Militär-geschichtliche Mitteilungen*, 1 (1974), 29-63; 'Capitalism and the Wilhelmine state', *The Historical Journal*, xxi no. 3 (1978), 737-50, and his contribution to *Society and politics in Wilhelmine Germany* (note 8, above).

'power bloc' to ally with the radical nationalists. The aim was to reconstitute their dominance of the bloc and preserve, as far as possible, their fast-disappearing privileges. Where Eley is particularly original is in insisting that the alliance was concluded as much on the terms of the radical nationalists as it was on the terms of the 'power bloc'. The radicalization of right-wing politics which this complex process represented constituted, in Eley's view, a decisive break with the traditions of German conservatism. It played a major part in laying the foundations for the emergence of German fascism. Thus it was political change rather than political continuity which created the preconditions for the growth of National Socialism.

This overall argument is convincingly put and should command general assent. Many of those who have attempted to refute it have done so on rather flimsy grounds.¹⁰ The idea of the 'self-mobilization' of the masses, for example, has been ridiculed by some of Eley's critics; but the concept surely does not prevent one from holding the view that the masses were structured, that village elites or other minority groups may have led the process of mobilization, or that independent agitators from a different social background may have played a role. There is now a considerable body of work to support the idea of the 1890s as the crucial decade of political mobilization in Germany, and to show that far from being deliberately engineered from above, by the government, the industrialists or the Junkers, this process contained a powerful populist challenge to the political establishment, the government and the parties. Here again Eley has been criticized for abusing the notion of populism, but as his careful discussion of the term (pp. 184-91) indicates, the use of the concept is perfectly defensible in this context. By appealing to 'the people', the new pressure-groups of the 1890s forced the political establishment, sooner or later, to alter its ideology, its style and its methods if it was to recapture popular support.

Eley's conclusions, perhaps, do not all differ so radically as he would like to think from those of the structuralist historians whose views are constantly under attack throughout the book. But the intellectual route by which he reaches them certainly is different: a highly original, immensely thought-provoking, and carefully thought-out application of Gramscian Neo-Marxism to Wilhelmine Germany. This is in itself a unique and considerable intellectual achievement. However, in some ways the book has distinct, discernible flaws. For one thing, it is very difficult to use it as a work of reference on the nationalist pressure-groups; it simply does not tell us with enough clarity or detail what were their ideas, what was their social composition, who were their leaders, or other basic facts of this kind. Obviously Eley did not set out to provide this kind of thing, but there are disadvantages involved in not doing so. For example, the development of the pressure-groups is not really related in the book to the development of the wider political problems to which they addressed themselves – indeed these barely get any discussion at all. So it is difficult to see how far the pressure-groups actually influenced government policy-making. The chapter on ideology, again, instead of outlining the programmes and major policies of the pressure-groups, mainly discusses their populist political style. This is perfectly justifiable in the overall terms of the book, though it rests on an unconvincingly broad

¹⁰ See especially the attacks on David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley, *Mythen deutscher Geschichtsschreibung: die gescheiterte bürgerliche Revolution von 1848* (Frankfurt, 1980), by Hans-Jürgen Puhle in *Journal für Geschichte* (1981), Heft 4, 44-5 and Hans-Ulrich Wehler in *Merkur* (1981), Heft 5, 478-87, with replies in following issue, pp. 757-60. These articles take up some of the points made in Eley's monograph.

definition of ideology; but it means that historians will not, on the whole, consult Eley's book for basic information, and this will enable some of them to avoid reading it or even discussing it altogether. This is all the more regrettable since the starting-point of Eley's work was his unpublished 1974 dissertation on the Navy League, which rested on a considerable body of archival research. In some ways it is a pity that Eley has chosen to cut down the presentation of this material in favour of extending the analysis to nationalist organizations. Here he is much more dependent on secondary work, and much of the book indeed concentrates on reinterpreting the kind of material already familiar from works such as Stegmann's *Die Erben Bismarcks*, rather than on presenting new results of primary research.

Nevertheless, the centrality of the Navy League to Eley's argument is abundantly clear. It was, after all, by far the largest of the nationalist pressure-groups. While the Colonial Society, the Society for the Eastern Marches and similar organizations never managed to get a membership much in excess of 30,000 or 40,000, the Navy League already had 250,000 members in 1904 and was nearing the million mark by the eve of the war. To some extent, this justifies the imbalance in the treatment accorded to these various groups. A heavy weight of interpretation rests on the empirical material which Eley presents in relation to the Navy League. In particular, his thesis that the pressure-groups were part of a 'self-mobilization' of the subordinate classes, and that their radical nationalism was forcing a far-reaching realignment of the right, in opposition to the government, by 1909, rests heavily on the argument that the Navy League was not simply a creature of Tirpitz, the industrialists or the Navy Office. A convincing demonstration of this point would constitute an important revision of previous views, for example those presented by Wilhelm Deist in his *Flottenpolitik und Flottenpropaganda*.¹¹ But – strangely in view of his combativeness on broader issues – Eley never engages Deist head-on, nor does he provide a detailed refutation of previous work on this point. In Eley's account, Tirpitz remains very much in the background, but an assessment of his role is really so crucial in the context of the overall argument that a sustained consideration of it is necessary. Moreover, at various critical points in the book (e.g. pp. 213–14) we are simply referred to Eley's unpublished doctoral dissertation for further details and references. This, when combined with the absence of a proper bibliography and list of archival sources, gives the book the appearance of a certain lack of empirical underpinning which, though misleading, has not helped its reception in Germany. Finally on this problem, a constant, central point of reference throughout the entire work is formed by the crisis of 1907–8 in the Navy League, in which the radical nationalists clashed with the old-style *Honoratioren* backed by Tirpitz. It comes as something of a surprise to learn, therefore, that the *Honoratioren* were eventually victorious, and Eley's rather convoluted attempt to interpret the affair as a victory for the radicals is less than wholly convincing, partly perhaps because it is so compressed; the crisis deserved much more extended treatment in view of its crucial importance to the work as a whole.

The theoretical aspects of Eley's book are also not without their problems. The most serious of these is the tendency to reduce everything to politics, once the initial socio-economic stimuli of the 'self-mobilization' of the subordinate classes in the 1890s have been briefly listed. On a number of occasions Eley comes very close to suggesting that the political determines itself. Thus, for example, the central clash

¹¹ Wilhelm Deist, *Flottenpolitik und Flottenpropaganda: das Nachrichtenbureau des Reichsmarineamts, 1897–1914* (Stuttgart, 1976).

between the new radical nationalists and the old forces of *Honoratiorenpolitik* is defined not in sociological terms but in political terms: 'In many ways the attack on *Honoratiorenpolitik* came from persons who were themselves *Honoratioren*... The radical nationalists were constituted as a distinctive political grouping not by their similar social origins, but by a shared political experience and its ideological formulation' (pp. 166–7). Eley is able to put forward this paradoxical idea because he defines the radical nationalists purely in terms of the most active elements in the leadership, and abolishes the significance of their constituency by arguing that ordinary members played no real part in the Navy League, whose activities he claims had little real meaning for them (pp. 137–9). This enables him to avoid having to provide detailed information on the social composition of the groups he is discussing. But it means that he portrays political activity once more as the affair of narrow elites. The Navy League's effects on a wider constituency are denied, despite the fact that a later section (pp. 218–20) reveals the vast scope and extent of its propaganda, with millions of leaflets and posters being distributed (some of them by the Ministry of Education), constant and energetic agitational speaking tours, and even a pioneering use of motion pictures. Eley's criteria for active political mobilization seem to me to be too strict in this case. Similarly, his criteria for judging the extent of industrialists' involvement in the Navy League are also unacceptably rigorous. He finds (pp. 142–5) that though donations from finance and industry kept the League going, these were made on an *ad hoc* rather than on a continuous basis, and concludes therefore that these links were only of secondary importance and that no manipulation by industrialists was involved! Eley's determination to rethink fundamentally every problem, every subject with which he is confronted is deeply impressive; the gritty, sustained quality of the thinking that went into this book commands the reader's respect: but at moments such as these one is moved to protest that the author is perhaps trying a little too hard. In the end too, as one ploughs through the book, along the well-worn furrows of parties and *Verbände*, radical nationalist agitators and industrial pressure-groups, one wonders whether this is really what is needed at this juncture in the development of historical scholarship on Wilhelmine Germany, however fresh and original the vision of our guide on the journey.

Similar things might be said of David Abraham's comparable attempt to apply a Neo-Marxist structural approach to the parallel crisis of the later years of the Weimar Republic. Both Eley and Abraham move within the same kind of theoretical universe, but Abraham, as much Althusserian as Gramscian, is more determined and more explicit in his political reductionism. Abraham defines class not by its relationship to the means of production but through 'practice in the political realm' (p. 19). Thus the crisis of Weimar is redefined not as the product of class antagonisms in the old Marxist sense but more as the outcome of conflicts within the 'ruling bloc'. Here we move once more in a familiar universe of political parties and pressure-groups (this time industrial and agrarian). Abraham's political definition of classes and fractions enables him to transform the crisis of Weimar into a sort of abstract quadrille in which agrarians, industrialists, petty-bourgeoisie and other groups advance, retreat, combine and change partners with increasingly bewildering frequency. Fundamentally he seems to me to be restating, in a very convoluted way, the familiar structuralist arguments that the Nazis were put in power by the old alliance of iron and rye. Interestingly, Abraham notes that 'in examining the structures and trajectories of these various conflicts, and in analysing how they contributed to the

demise of the Republic, one is struck by how much they had in common with the developments of the Empire's last decade. Pressure-groups, political parties and areas of contention all bore a remarkable similarity to their pre-war predecessors' (p. 4). Thus Abraham gives an Althusserian gloss to the structuralist view of continuity in German history in its most static form. He demonstrates little of the awareness which Eley shows of the regional and local diversity of German politics, or the considerable problems involved in reconstructing the internal history of the *Verbände*. His book is difficult to read not least because the actors in it are not human beings for the most part, but abstractions such as 'labour', 'capital', 'industry' and so on. At its most extreme this leads to statements such as 'the bourgeoisie saw no other way out of the crisis: it decided "consciously" in favour of the Nazis' (p. 323). It is difficult to know whether statements at this level of abstraction can be empirically validated at all. In this sense, it seems more sensible to regard Abraham's book as a work of political science than as a work of history.

Yet for all this, Abraham's book is an important one not just for Marxist theorists or political scientists but also for historians of the Weimar Republic. It rests on a sustained attempt to link the effects of the economic crisis of 1929–33 on industry and agriculture with the shifting policies and alignments of the economic pressure groups, and it makes clear why industrialists and agrarians had an interest in the destruction of civil liberties (though this is not the same as showing that they were responsible for bringing it about). It is an important contribution, therefore, to the continuing debate among historians on this subject.¹² Moreover, by moving questions of economic policy back into the centre of attention once more, it provides a salutary corrective to so much of the literature on the collapse of the Weimar Republic, which concentrates on questions of high politics, individual ambition, or anti-democratic political and ideological traditions. Finally, this is the first real attempt at a serious Marxist interpretation of these events that gets away from the sterilities of the 'Stamokap' approach, with its obsession with proving the guilt of individual capitalists, towards a more sophisticated structural approach. This has its costs, as I have briefly tried to suggest. For all these reasons, however, whatever reservations it may in the end inspire, Abraham's book demands to be taken seriously by anyone interested in explaining the collapse of the Weimar Republic.

V

It is striking that the work of Abraham and Eley, which together constitutes perhaps the most significant recent contribution of explicitly Marxist historiography to modern German history, is concerned not so much with the relations between classes as with changing alignments of class fractions within the 'hegemonic bloc'. They are concerned to reinterpret a relatively familiar area of historical research. When we turn to a more broadly based view of the recent German past, we are confronted with a daunting lack of satisfactory studies of the social and economic history of the period. The neglect under which this area has for so long suffered in Germany is

¹² Bernd Weisbrod, *Schwerindustrie in der Weimarer Republik: Interessenpolitik zwischen Stabilisierung und Krise* (Wuppertal, 1978); Reinhard Neebe, *Grossindustrie, Staat und NSDAP 1930–1933: Paul Silverberg und der Reichsverband der Deutschen Industrie in der Krise der Weimarer Republik* (Göttingen, 1981); Michael Grübler, *Die Spitzenverbände der Wirtschaft und das erste Kabinett Brüning: Vom Ende der Grossen Koalition 1929/30 bis zum Vorabend der Banken 1931: Eine Quellenstudie* (Düsseldorf, 1982), are three recent empirical studies.

strikingly illustrated by the fact that Carl-Ludwig Holtfrerich's new study of perhaps the most celebrated episode in the entire history of the German economy, the great inflation of 1923, is the first-ever scholarly work on the subject by a German historian, the first study to be written by an historian rather than by an economist, and the first to use unpublished archival material (and Holtfrerich has consulted not only the German records, but also British, American, French and Belgian archives as well). Holtfrerich is also the first historian to focus not solely on the drama of the hyperinflation of 1923 but also on the no less important phenomenon of the more gradual (but still very noticeable) inflation that preceded it, beginning in 1914 then speeding up noticeably after the war.

His book at one stroke elevates the whole discussion of the inflation on to an entirely new level. It contains an exhaustive (and highly technical) discussion of the problems of establishing reliable statistical indices, contained in a chapter which the author is kind enough to advise non-economists to skip (p. 6). There are over sixty statistical tables, some of them very extensive; an effort might have been made to present more of this material in a digestible manner in the form of graphs and histograms. Holtfrerich breaks new ground in his extensive coverage of the international dimension of the inflation. The work does have one major drawback – its relative neglect of the political decisions which so encouraged the inflationary process between 1920 and 1923. In a sense, this book offers an understanding of the inflation that is too narrowly economic. Nevertheless, Holtfrerich's study provides us with a far more reliable basis than we have ever had for measuring the social and economic impact of one of the major economic crises of the Weimar Republic.

To some extent, however, his labours have served to underline the enormous problems of drawing conclusions from statistical material even for such a statistically minded age as the twentieth century, as indeed he is at pains to point out. Taking the longer view, it is not always possible to distinguish the effects of the First World War from the effects of the inflation. It seems agreed that the war had a levelling effect on incomes, but Holtfrerich's attempt to determine what happened thereafter is beset with difficulties. In comparing the effects of the inflation on real income distribution, Holtfrerich comes to the conclusion that it continued the levelling process: 'it was very big, not middling or small incomes and property that were destroyed by the inflation' (p. 330). But there are problems with this argument. Holtfrerich's wage indices are in part constructed on the incomes of railway workers and miners, who worked in sectors where labour was well organized and post-war readjustments boosted the demand for labour. Things might have been very different in unskilled labour, sweated trades, and women's work. Theft, pilfering and payment in kind – all rampant in the inflation years – make it very difficult to quantify real incomes. These difficulties are compounded by the relative absence of working-class household budgets for this period. Moreover, the general figures of income distribution are too global; it is very difficult, for example, to separate out the salary-earners who lost their money investments from those who had none to lose in the first place. Finally, many of the tables compare real income distribution in 1913 with its equivalent in 1925, 1926 or 1928, which again makes it difficult to distinguish the effects of war from the effects of inflation and opens up the possibility of effects by further determinants of income redistribution in the intervening period (especially 1924). Economic historians are often, perhaps too often, concerned to construct national indices and averages; Holtfrerich's work indicates once more just how difficult this is.

A solution to these problems is increasingly being sought in Germany and elsewhere by a turn to local or regionally based social history. Recent work such as Ursula Büttner's highly informative study of Hamburg in the Depression of 1928-31 can contribute probably more to a precise answer to questions such as who suffered from the economic crisis, who voted Nazi, and what the economic interest groups were up to, than generalizing, nationally orientated work such as that of Holtfrerich or Abraham.¹³ Only at a local or regional level can we obtain sufficiently detailed evidence to be able to test many of the general questions which historians have raised about the major features of modern German history, whether it is the extent to which the masses were manipulated by the elites or the degree to which the Third Reich commanded the assent of its subjects, or whether it is the cohesion and collective interest (if any) of the *Mittelstand* or the degree of acquiescence of workers in the capitalist socio-economic and political system. A local and regional social history which is aware of these larger questions has recently been making great progress in the Federal Republic and the D.D.R. A striking example of what it can contribute to a reassessment of the German past is provided by the massive project (2,630 pages so far, in four volumes, with two more to come) of the Institute of Contemporary History in Munich, on Bavaria in the Nazi era. The project, which makes substantial use of court records and of detailed local reports on the 'morale' and political behaviour of the population, long extracts from which make up the first volume of the series, originally began as a study of resistance and oppression. Historical scholarship in this area has gone through a number of stages over the past few decades. Initially, the 'Third Reich' was portrayed as a complete and impregnable system of totalitarian rule and social atomization. Not long after its collapse, however, conservative historians in the Federal Republic began to recover the lost history of the oppositional movements that culminated in the Bomb Plot of 20 July 1944. The parallel East German recovery of the history of Communist opposition to the 'Third Reich' was not followed until much later by a West German account of the workers' opposition, broadened to include Social Democratic groups as well. The problem with all this work, however, contends Martin Broszat, in his general account of the project, is that its analytical thrust is minimal. It exhausts itself 'in the outward form of the piety-filled payment of respect' (iv, p. 692). The emphasis given to the all-embracing power of the regime throws the action of organized oppositional groups into stark, heroic relief. They stand out from their social context; their martyrdom and courage reinforces a simplistic and undifferentiated picture of the totalitarian power of their opponent. Such a view of the resistance, as Broszat notes, cannot mean very much to the younger generation of the present day. How are they to relate the image of heroic resistance fighter and the totalitarian state to their own experience of post-war West Germany? Indeed, he implies, the uncritical projection of this polarity on to the present can have disastrous political consequences. So the project aims to relativize the picture by showing that the regime was less 'totalitarian' than it might seem, and that resistance was a more complex, many-layered affair than previously suggested.

In reaching a moral judgement on those who resisted Nazism, Broszat argues, the student must bear in mind the context within which the individual had to operate, the degree of choice that was open to him or her. The motives and aims of those involved may be of only secondary importance in considering the moral significance

¹³ Ursula Büttner, *Hamburg in der Staats- und Wirtschaftskrise 1928-31* (Hamburg, 1982).

of their actions. To judge an act of resistance by its results, and by its relation to the degree of opposition which the actor's situation allowed is, after all, merely to judge it by the same criteria as are customarily applied to an act of collaboration. From this perspective the actions of army officers and higher civil servants, who enjoyed considerable social and institutional power and could bring into play values and standards of the pre-Nazi era, may appear of less moral significance than the less dramatic but perhaps, in their context, more successful actions of the socially disadvantaged, the dependent, the young, the powerless, or the isolated individual. The failure of active, illegal opposition, in almost every case doomed from the start, was no more tragic than the failure to take political advantage of the innumerable possibilities of effective partial resistance in the various stages of the regime's development. This view must of course be seen in the light of Broszat's overall interpretation of the self-generating, progressive radicalization of the Nazi political system outlined in section II above. Resistance should be measured against the real possibility of achieving something, not monumentalized into an heroic act of defiance against an invincible opponent. By analysing in detail the compromises and mixtures of conformity and deviance which characterized the behaviour of so many people and institutions in the 'Third Reich', the project demythologizes the problem of resistance and portrays it in all its human complexity.

The test of the value of this approach lies, of course, in the individual contributions. They range in subject from studies of the Bavarian nobility, the architectural profession, the civil service, the municipal authorities, the schools, the press and the theatre, to Catholic youth organizations, industrial entrepreneurs, the legal profession, women workers, Jehovah's Witnesses, deviant youth gangs and inmates of the concentration camps in Dachau and Flossenbürg (the latter reserved for so-called 'asocial elements'). Not all of them fit in equally to the overall concept of the project, nor do they add up to a systematic or comprehensive picture. They are very varied in quality, and too many of them are institutional rather than social-historical in orientation. The most substantial contribution, a study of the Upper Bavarian mining village of Penzberg by Klaus Tenfelde, is one of those that fits rather awkwardly into the overall project, since it deals with virtually the entire history of the village from its emergence as a mining centre at the turn of the century. Only after well over 200 pages, indeed, does Tenfelde get to the 'Third Reich' itself, and perhaps it would have made more sense to have published it separately (it is, after all, nearly 400 pages long). Tenfelde's massive study of nineteenth-century coalminers in the Ruhr is already a classic;¹⁴ this new study is sure to become one. It is a superb example of what can be achieved by a social history of a single small community over a long period of time, if the right questions are asked and the political dimension is worked into the analysis. Penzberg was notorious as 'a red island in a brown sea'; the only convinced Nazis there before 1933, as Tenfelde shows, were a small group of office workers. By paying careful attention to the socio-economic determinants of the collective solidarity of the miners in this isolated industrial community, Tenfelde manages to present a convincing picture of the growth of the labour movement in all its aspects. This solidarity formed the essential social basis for the frequent acts of deviance and nonconformity which characterized the village throughout the 'Third Reich'. They ranged from failure to give the 'Hitler greeting' – the subject of a splendidly revealing photograph on page 315 – to an

¹⁴ Klaus Tenfelde, *Sozialgeschichte der Bergarbeiterschaft an der Ruhr im 19. Jahrhundert* (Bonn, 1977).

uprising at the very end of the war, when the effort of former Penzberg Social Democrats and Communists to prevent further destruction was bloodily crushed by the 'Werewolf' organization in a final, brutal act of Nazi revenge.

Tenfelde's contribution also makes clear, however, how limited the possibilities of overt resistance really were. The isolated nature of the community and the pragmatic political orientation of its leaders prevented any acts of heroic but futile martyrdom. But even the mildest forms of disobedience or deviance could have the most appalling consequences for the perpetrators, as Peter Hüttenberger's exploration of cases brought before the special courts in Munich between 1933 and 1939 vividly illustrates. Many cases of anti-war jokes and rumours, critical remarks, symbolic disapproval and self-distancing from the regime were brought before the courts, and their meanings are subtly and carefully deciphered by the author to give a varied and nuanced picture of the discontents of the Germans under the Nazi regime. As Hüttenberger shows, if those who were found guilty were working class, poor or, above all, socially marginal, they were likely to incur savage punishments which contrasted strongly with the leniency or even tolerance with which such behaviour on the part of the middle and upper classes was often treated.

The fact that such cases mainly reached the courts through denunciations, which took place on a massive scale, also opens up the whole question of active collaboration, a question which is pursued further in Zdenek Zofka's contribution on rural society in the Gunzburg area. Zofka demonstrates convincingly that the Nazi regime, far from bringing the village *Lumpenproletariat* to power, compromised, perhaps out of necessity, with existing village elites. A further aspect of collaboration is examined in Ian Kershaw's discussion of the reactions of the non-Jewish majority of the population to the persecution of the Jews. As Kershaw demonstrates, the Nazis were able to build on the latent social anti-semitism of the population to achieve a widespread toleration of the gradual removal of the (not very numerous) Jewish community from everyday social life in Bavaria; the many illustrations of village signs proclaiming 'Jews not wanted here' are a graphic reminder of the extent of this kind of prejudice. The mass murder of the Jews during the war, however, was an autonomous product of the Nazi system, not the result of an appeal to public opinion, let alone a response to public demand. Indeed, Kershaw argues that the Nazis came to power not because of their anti-semitism, but despite it; their increasing brutality towards the Jews caused them, if anything, to lose popularity, not to gain it. The Nazis' only attempt at a real outburst of nationwide anti-semitic violence, the 'Night of Broken Glass', aroused so much adverse comment that it was never repeated. Yet while they were unable to turn the latent anti-semitism of the population into a positive mass force, the Nazis were enabled by it to marginalize the Jews and to carry out their programme of destruction. In contrast to the 'euthanasia' programme, which was brought to a halt by the protests of the churches, the medical profession and the local population, the murder of the Jews went ahead without opposition, despite the fact that its existence was certainly not unknown to ordinary people in Germany. The contrast between the situation of the mentally ill and handicapped, with their multiple links with the rest of German society (friends, relatives, priests, doctors, etc.) and the increasingly isolated and marginalized Jewish community, its links cut off one by one, was decisive. The lesson of all this is that where Nazi policy conflicted with deeply held local practices and beliefs, it failed to win support. Under some circumstances, indeed, it had to be abandoned or carried out in secret.

The major problem with this work, perhaps, is its tendency to expand the concept of resistance until it covers anything short of positive enthusiasm for the regime. Yet *Bayern in der NS-Zeit* demonstrates, none the less, that a regional or local social history can contribute to answering with a new subtlety and precision some of the most profound questions of German history. A procedure such as Tenfelde's or Kershaw's is much more likely to yield rewards, for example, than the misplaced ambition of a sociological commentator such as Rainer C. Baum in *The Holocaust and the German Elite*, an attempt to show that 'German elites' suffered from 'value dissensus', leading to a 'moral indifference' which enabled them to tolerate or even carry out the horrific human destruction ordered by the Nazis without a qualm. Since Baum reaches this rather less than interesting conclusion on the basis of a sociological analysis of a small sample of German novels, eked out with a partial and not very thorough reading of secondary work on German history from 1871 to 1945, it is scarcely surprising that he fails to convince. Novels are not without their uses, but their relation to other kinds of historical evidence is very problematical, and reading fiction is no substitute for the hard grind of serious historical research. Baum asks some of the right questions, perhaps; but he does not really know how to come up with any satisfactory answers. In fact we know relatively little about the social history of Germany's upper classes; the main thrust of social history has been at the lower end of the social scale. Here again local or regional studies are more likely to be illuminating than broad generalizations such as those attempted by Baum.¹⁵

VI

Just as important, however, is to study the relations of classes with one another. Here too a local approach is currently the most promising, and it is now beginning to be applied to the Imperial period as well as to the 'Third Reich'. A good example of this work is David Crew's study of Bochum, which is a pioneering attempt to apply the concepts and methods of the 'new urban history', as developed by Stephan Thernstrom and others in the U.S.A., to the social structure of a German town in the age of industrialization. Crew is critical of the structuralist approach to modern German history because 'by giving little weight to the experience and activities of the great mass of the German people it fails to provide us with a rounded social history of Germany during a critical period of transition'. This is certainly true. But Crew for all his intention to write a history 'from the bottom up', does not perhaps do enough to remedy this deficiency. A whole range of vital aspects of urban and working-class life are underplayed in his study: local politics, leisure, culture, religion, ethnicity, crime and social order, health and disease, women (except as workers), children and the family, even birth, death and marriage rates. All these things are germane to a political analysis, as Erhard Lucas showed in his studies of Hamborn and Remscheid, published in 1976.¹⁶ Crew fails to provide any

¹⁵ Work carried out as part of this general project is available in English in Ian Kershaw, *Popular opinion and political dissent in the Third Reich: Bavaria 1933-1945* (Oxford, 1981). A parallel project on the nineteenth century, also supervised by Broszat and similarly rich in fresh insights and perspectives is Gert Zang (ed.), *Provinzialisierung einer Region: Regionale Unterentwicklung und liberale Politik in der Stadt und im Kreis Konstanz im 19. Jahrhundert. Untersuchungen zur Entstehung der Bürgerlichen Gesellschaft in der Provinz* (Frankfurt, 1978).

¹⁶ Erhard Lucas, *Zwei Formen von Radikalismus in der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung* (Frankfurt, 1976).

maps, and makes little attempt to convey the atmosphere or 'feel' of the town. Moreover, the very quantitative techniques that form the core of Crew's study are themselves rather problematical, and it is unfortunate that the book lacks a proper description of the procedures used.

Bochum was a mining and steel town on the Ruhr. It experienced a staggeringly rapid population growth in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Though, curiously, Crew nowhere provides a table of basic, gross population, it is clear that the town grew from the size of a village to the dimensions of a major industrial centre within a few decades. This overall growth concealed recurrent temporary migrations of even more impressive dimensions, and Crew's exposition of this point is one of the most valuable things in the book. Between 1880 and 1900 the net volume of population turnover amounted to thirteen times the total population in 1880; while the resident population rose from 32,798 to 64,702, some 232,092 people actually came to live in the town in this period while 194,836 left it. Few stayed there long, in other words. This makes any statistical analysis very hazardous, especially the kind attempted by Crew. He relies heavily on the city address books, which were annually issued and so missed out a lot of the temporary migrants, while also probably under-recording the poorest, most destitute elements in the population. (I once tried to trace a sample of several dozen people arrested in a riot in Hamburg through the city's address book; not surprisingly, perhaps, hardly any of them could be found.) At the other extreme, the richest people in the town, who might well have had country residences elsewhere, may also be under-recorded. All this causes a lot of difficulties for Crew's pioneering attempt, in chapters 3 and 4, to tackle the problem of whether society in Bochum was more highly stratified and less mobile than comparable societies in other industrializing nations, above all in the United States.

He concludes that the majority remained occupationally stable, but this may well reflect the fact that most of those who did not probably got jobs elsewhere and so disappeared from the record. The same goes for his conclusion that non-manual workers had an extremely low rate of downward mobility into manual work, and also for the conclusion that hardly any manual workers were able to move into the non-manual world. The high rate of geographical mobility, when added to deaths and retirements, means that Crew's random sample of 1,117 adult males found in the address book in 1880 is reduced to 484 by 1890 and 290 by 1901. Even within 10 years, 57 per cent of the sample had disappeared and though out-migrants were mainly (though far from exclusively) unskilled, we do not know what they did after they left. A second problem is age, an important determinant of occupation in trades such as mining and steelwork where physical strength and control were paramount and industrial diseases and accidents frequent. Crew assumes that entering a non-manual occupation was a step up, but for a retired miner to have opened a small shop or bar may not have meant very much in terms of social mobility. Similarly although Crew lists the occupations of 697 workers who married in 1900 and compares their jobs with those of their fathers, for the exercise to carry real conviction they have to be compared with the jobs their fathers had *at the same age*. The educational statistics (p. 94) are slightly more satisfactory in this respect, though they are still rather rough and ready, and they are valid only for the Gymnasium, a rather middle-class institution in any case. The statistics of savings and home-ownership are interesting but their relation to social mobility is only loosely established, and needs to be buttressed by a study of the town's social geography.

Finally, women are virtually absent from this, as from the great majority of all social mobility studies. After all this, Crew's conclusion that social mobility in Bochum was lower than it was in America appears less than wholly convincing. The whole chapter seems to be leading up to an endorsement of Dahrendorf's argument that the persistence of pre-industrial values in Germany inhibited the growth of individualism and the desire for personal advancement.¹⁷ Crew concludes, surprisingly, that the lack of social mobility reflected instead the insecurity and unpredictability of working-class life, which limited the worker's ambition to the acquisition of a steady job. This is plausible, but there are much better indications of working-class values and the problems of the worker's life than an index of social mobility, so the value of compiling it remains debatable.

The central chapter, on social stratification, is by far the longest in the book, and deals respectively with industrialists and the *Mittelstand*. There are some sketches of members of the 'urban elite', and an account of their relations with artisans, shopkeepers and small property-owners, but without a serious exploration of local politics it all remains very unclear; there is no systematic analysis of local political and municipal institutions and their social composition, for example. Moreover, where politics are mentioned there is too little attention paid to the dynamics of political change, with evidence from widely differing periods being lumped rather indiscriminately together. The root problem perhaps is a refusal to take class formation and class consciousness seriously; again, Crew is more concerned with sociological questions derived from American studies (especially Herbert Gutman's work on Paterson, New Jersey). Finally there are two substantial chapters on 'worker protest' and 'strikes'. These too are based on questions asked by American sociologists such as Neil Smelser and Charles Tilly. Crew concludes that miners were more liable to strike than metal-workers because they worked in gangs, and lived in the same neighbourhoods. It is a pity that he concentrates so heavily on the spectacular strikes of 1889, 1905 and 1912, to the neglect of other, smaller strikes and less dramatic forms of protest. A broader definition of 'worker protest' might have led to rather different conclusions. Crew is right to argue against the thesis that militancy among workers was the product of uprooting, but his concentration on this question turns his attention away from other aspects of worker resistance to exploitation. One is left with the overall impression that questions suggested by the classics of American urban sociology may not necessarily be the right ones to use when approaching the history of German industrial towns.

Nevertheless, for all its weaknesses, many of them perhaps inevitable consequences of its pioneering status, Crew's work on Bochum does succeed in making a significant contribution to the debate on modern German history at a number of points. It presents a considerable quantity of evidence to suggest that the *Mittelstand* in the town was socially and politically divided and by no means successfully manipulated by the government and the big bourgeoisie (pp. 127-45). It contains an important discussion of employer paternalism, which Crew portrays – in detailed and convincing contrast to the commonly accepted thesis of the 'feudalized bourgeoisie' – as a consequence of the employers' need to attract and retain a steady workforce in a situation of high labour turnover, and to control labour costs as far as possible by preventing workers from organizing and striking. It contains an account of charitable voluntary associations (especially the Association Against Street and

¹⁷ Ralf Dahrendorf, *Society and democracy in Germany* (London, 1968).

House Begging) that is all the more valuable because of the paucity of similar studies for other parts of Germany. If at times the arguments outrun the material – especially in the odd conclusion, which, at the end of a book devoted to comparing the American and German experiences of industrialization, concludes that such comparisons are largely meaningless – then this is not necessarily a bad thing. Bochum, with its relative absence of pre-industrial traditions, may not be the best local example on which to base an assessment of the importance of such traditions in German industrial society, but on a smaller scale and in more specific, partial questions, Crew's book is a thought-provoking contribution to the current debate, and a reminder of the importance of a locally based social history as well as of the formidable difficulties of providing it with a satisfactory quantitative base.

These difficulties are solved rather more satisfactorily by Gary Cohen in his imaginatively researched study of Germans in Prague from 1861 to the First World War. The quantitative skeleton on which Cohen builds his work is provided by samples from the manuscript census returns, which include among other things information on language of everyday use, occupation and status of employment as well as basic demographic data. The resulting analysis is a significant contribution to the social history of nationalism. Cohen shows that there was little ethnic differentiation in mid-nineteenth-century Prague. Most people spoke both Czech and German and considered themselves Bohemian. By the 1850s, however, Czech nationalism was making important advances among artisans and craft workers, and the upheavals of the 1860s led to a response in the form of the emergence of an organized German-speaking public life. This was expressed through a network of voluntary associations led by the German Casino and extending through the German Gymnastics Society and the foundation of German professional organizations such as the German Society of Practising Physicians, founded in 1862. Yet these associations were dominated by the local German notables, the *Honoratioren*, who were reluctant to give German-speaking artisans and workers a role. Deprived of a satisfactory group life, the lower classes gradually drifted away, stopped speaking German and changed their names to give them a Czech character. Moreover, as Prague industrialized, there was a massive influx of purely Czech-speaking immigrant labourers and their families to the city. From their base in the artisan community the Czechs moved on to an increasing extent to conquer the world of the small businessman or shopkeeper and the lower reaches of the state service. This was compounded by the shift in the ethnic loyalties of this part of the city's substantial Jewish community from German to Czech. This was not because the liberal German notables were anti-semitic; in fact anti-semitism was much stronger among the Czech nationalists. Jewish membership in the German Casino increased to 45 per cent by 1898–9, and there were several Jews among the directors. These bourgeois Jews retained their religious identity and were vigorous in opposing anti-semitism. But as the liberal notables of the Casino proved increasingly unable to defend the German community, particularly among the lower classes, so new, more radical and *völkisch* German nationalist groups with a strongly anti-semitic flavour emerged. At the same time radical Czech nationalists were also prone to violent outbursts of anti-semitism. Faced with these pressures, a large part of the Jewish lower classes chose to submit to the stronger threat in the 1890s and switched their allegiance from German to Czech, hoping thereby to lessen the Czechs' identification of the Jews with the hated German community.

So Cohen's book is among other things a richly detailed study of the decline of

Honoratiorenpolitik and the rise of radical nationalism which in some ways provides a useful social-historical counterpart to Eley's broader study of the same phenomenon in Imperial Germany. Cohen's careful statistical procedures make his analysis convincing; but they are embedded in an insightful and sympathetic qualitative account that makes every effort – including the provision of many interesting contemporary photographs – to convey the flavour of German community life in late nineteenth-century Prague. His discussion makes it clear that while nationalist conflicts were played out in the public arena, in private life Czechs and Germans continued to live side by side and engage in daily business with one another as usual. This is a carefully nuanced, most instructive piece of work; what impresses most, however, is the way in which Cohen's statistical techniques have been carefully subordinated to a broader approach drawing on many other kinds of evidence in a way which Crew and Holtfrerich, for all the strengths of their work in some respects, largely fail to do.

VII

What conclusions can be drawn from the contributions to modern German history surveyed in this article? In the first place, surely, it is clear that there is no longer any real justification for talking of an 'orthodoxy' in German historiography, if indeed there ever was one. The moment at which the 'structuralist' paradigm was built up, in the wake of the Fischer controversy and into the 1970s, has now passed. Different interpretations and methodologies, different schools of thought of the most varied kind exist side by side and continue to be developed. A second fairly obvious feature of all this work is a heightened awareness – to put it no more strongly – of theory. This is found at its most extreme in the neo-Marxist work of Eley and Abraham, but it can also be detected even in the apparently most unreflective of the approaches surveyed here, the biographical approach, which owes at least something to elite theory (in so far as the Kaiser or the 'Führer' is studied in the context of an elite group such as the Liebenberg Circle or the top Nazi leadership) and displays a detectable tendency to incorporate the concepts of psychoanalysis, sometimes (as in the work of Kohut, for example) on a fairly systematic basis. Thirdly, there is an increasing diversity of research methods. The detailed reconstruction of personalities, and relationships and events at the centre of politics continues, and the structural study of economic and nationalist pressure-groups which was placed on the research agenda in the 1960s and 1970s shows no sign of slackening off. But these approaches have now been joined by others. The quantitative study of economic and social history, both at a national and at a local or regional level, has reached new levels of sophistication. In books such as those of Cohen, Crew and Holtfrerich, it has shown – despite its problems – that it has a major contribution to make at a number of points. There is also a growing body of work on what the Germans call *Alltagsgeschichte*, often avowedly non-quantitative in method, that is opening up new kinds of sources and showing a new and welcome concern with the recovery of everyday human experience in the past.

Fourthly, this work is being conducted internationally. It is not possible to talk any more of a specific approach or interpretation being adopted by German historians and contrast it with that prevalent in the Anglo-Saxon world. This is as true of style as it is of content. It has often been said that British and American historians are more concise and more readable than their German colleagues, but

in reality authors such as Abraham, Eley or Baum are no less dense and difficult than many of their German counterparts, while a book such as Kennedy's rivals any German dissertation in length and is certainly far from unique in this respect in the Anglo-Saxon literature. Anglo-American scholars are, of course, to some degree detached from the German scene, and the vehemence with which their work is attacked in the Federal Republic when – sometimes unexpectedly – it strikes a raw nerve or upsets a cherished point of view, has often been surprising. But the scholarly community is increasingly an international one. Frequent conferences in Germany and elsewhere, generous research scholarships offered by German government agencies and foundations, easy international travel, and the establishment of foci of contact such as the German Historical Institute in London, have built up a strong network of relationships between British, German and American historians. Non-German historians of Germany are indeed taken seriously in the F.R.G., but only if they have done as much work in German archives as their German counterparts. Sometimes, indeed, as in the case of Kershaw, this work is actually being carried on as part of a larger research project organized in Germany itself; while Holtfreich's book is also closely connected with a collaborative international study of the social and economic history of the German inflation being conducted (and partly financed) in Britain and the United States as well as in West Germany. This international dimension of historical scholarship is reflected on almost every level. Neo-Marxist theories are being applied to history in Germany as well as in the U.S.A. – for example, in some of the work produced at the Max Planck Institute in Göttingen, or at the University of Konstanz.¹⁸ 'Structuralist' views of continuity are advanced by historians in America as well as in Germany. The biographical approach has its adherents in Britain as well as in Germany and across the Atlantic.

These are mostly welcome developments. But it would be wrong to suggest that the various approaches surveyed here are all part of a diverse but essentially collaborative effort. Historiography today is a fragmented discipline; not only are there innumerable subdisciplines and specialisms, but increasingly there are also competing theories and methodologies as well. Yet German history, more than most, is structured by a set of major questions, above all relating to the 'Third Reich' and its short- and long-term origins. This means that, far from confining themselves to often unrelated specialist discourses, most historians of Germany are still to an unusual degree talking about the same things. Along with the political relevance of these questions, this makes for a lot of controversy, as each approach claims to get to the heart of the matter under discussion and relegates competing approaches to a category of useful but ultimately marginal knowledge. Faced with this situation, it seems appropriate to enter a plea for theoretical and methodological eclecticism, in which as many of the available theories and methods are used as are appropriate to the subject, provided that they are not mutually contradictory; and urge that historians bear in mind the broader context of their own particular work.

In the end, however, a choice of priorities in this area is unavoidable. To begin with, then, it seems to me that the biographical approach in its present form has reached the limits of its usefulness. Even where, as in the case of Anderson's biography of Windthorst, the subject's life is fully contextualized, the broader questions

¹⁸ See for example P. Kriedte, H. Medick, J. Schlumbohm, *Industrialization before industrialization: rural industry in the genesis of capitalism* (Cambridge, 1981); or the various contributions to the series 'Sozialgeschichtliche Bibliothek' edited by Dieter Groh and published by the Ullstein Verlag.

to which the biographer addressed herself might arguably have been better answered by focusing more sharply on them than on the life of one individual – by writing a monograph on the Catholic Centre Party, in other words. More traditional ‘Great Man’ biographies have little to offer. Michael Kater has recently commented that our understanding of Nazism has hardly been advanced at all by the recent spate of biographies of Hitler.¹⁹ Little has so far been gained by trying to use ‘psychohistorical’ techniques on the ‘Führer’. More important perhaps is to obtain a subtler understanding of the presentation of the individual in society, as Ian Kershaw has attempted by contrasting what is known of Hitler’s personality and actions with propagandistic projections of the ‘Führer’ image and popular responses to them.²⁰ Alternatively, as Kater has suggested, Hitler can be seen in his social context, and his social prejudices and incertitudes can be used to generate a new understanding of some of his policies. Finally, as the ‘structuralists’ maintain, Hitler also has to be seen as one element among many in a complex decision-making structure, which influenced him as much as he influenced it. All these points are relevant to an understanding of Kaiser Wilhelm as well. If biography is to have a future, it needs to incorporate not an historiographically unattainable psychoanalytic understanding, but a sociological or anthropological concept of the individual.

Secondly, what I have called the ‘structuralist’ approach, though less obviously and rather unevenly, is also coming up against the limits of its explanatory power. I suggest this perhaps rather tentatively, because clearly a great deal of work in this mode is still continuing to appear, and much of it is undoubtedly of the highest quality. Yet how far can the study of decision-making processes, of bureaucratic instances, legislative chambers, government ministers, economic and ideological pressure-groups and political parties take us towards an understanding of the major questions of modern German history? A common feature of much of this work is to see politics in something of a vacuum, with economic and social structures and processes very much underplayed. As Mason remarks in his critique of the ‘structuralist’ (or, as he terms it, ‘functionalist’) approach, ‘What was permitted by conditions, or was possible, must be analysed, and it is here that marxism offers a more comprehensive framework than an approach which concentrates heavily upon political institutions and decision-making processes’.²¹ Yet Marxism nowadays is as fragmented as any ‘bourgeois’ discipline, and offers not one framework but many. In some cases, such as David Abraham’s work, it seems to me to do some violence to the notorious regional, social and institutional diversity of pre-Nazi Germany and to present itself in a rigid and abstract form that goes some way towards justifying the criticisms that have traditionally been levelled at it. In the hands of a more subtle historian such as Geoff Eley or indeed Mason himself, Marxist and neo-Marxist approaches (particularly of a Gramscian rather than an Althusserian variety, though no doubt the contrast between the two should not be overdrawn) do, however, clearly have much of value and originality to offer.

Even those studies, like Eley’s, which make reference to local and regional socio-economic structures, suffer from the lack of available research monographs in this area. Local and regional history in Germany was long dominated by an antiquarian approach, while mainstream history had an unmistakably centralizing tendency, even to the extent of ignoring most of Germany other than Prussia.

¹⁹ Michael Kater, ‘Hitler in a social context’, *Central European History*, xiv, 3 (1981), 243–72.

²⁰ Ian Kershaw, *Der Hitler-Mythos: Volksmeinung und Propaganda im Dritten Reich* (Stuttgart, 1980).

²¹ G. Hirschfeld, L. Kettenacker (eds.), *The ‘Führer state’*, p. 37.

Historians are now beginning to be aware that the regional and local diversity of German society holds the key to a number of important general questions about the development of modern Germany. It is more than simply saying that things were more complicated than was previously supposed, or that there were regional variations on national themes. Germany was politically united only late in the day, and German society remained highly localized throughout the nineteenth century. The development of the German economy was uneven, and political groupings such as the liberals had their roots above all in local social structures. Here too the allegedly non-political elements of German public life were most strongly anchored: the distaste for politics which is supposed to have played such an important role in modern German history was to a degree based on local resentments.²² The meaning and role of politics in everyday life and its relations to economic and social structures can really only be studied at a local or regional level, where the evidence is sufficiently thickly textured to facilitate a thorough exploration of these problems.

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²² See Rudy Koshar, 'Away from the centre: two recent local studies of Nazism from the Federal Republic', *Social History*, viii, 1 (January 1983), 77-86.