

Diether Raff. *A History of Germany from the Medieval Empire to the Present*. Oxford, Hamburg, and New York: Berg, 1988. Pp. ix, 507. Cloth, \$51.00; paper, \$16.95.

To be effective a textbook must exhibit readability, coherent structure, conciseness without superficiality, and consistency of viewpoint; it should also provide adequate discussion of the evolution and significance of events so that students acquire insight without being overwhelmed by the complexities of each topic. Raff's German history, in uncluttered translation by Bruce Little, for the most part has these attributes.

Despite its title, this book deals with German history prior to the French Revolution in one scant chapter, but here a basic theme of the volume is introduced: the thwarting of periodic aspirations for national unity and power by political, cultural, social, and religious particularism. Raff's narrative proceeds by emphasizing the dualisms that have plagued German life, including the rivalry between Prussia and Austria and the clash between liberal constitutionalism and an authoritarian tradition. A growing industrialism must contend with a social order rooted in the agrarian past. The social question, one of Raff's major interests, pits workers against the bourgeoisie and is ultimately swallowed by nationalism, itself rent by *kleindeutsch* and *grossdeutsch* tendencies. Even the genius of Bismarck can achieve at best uneasy compromises among these forces.

Raff blames the failure of the Weimar Republic not only on the intransigence of the West but also on internal dichotomies: the nostalgia for order versus the burden of freedom and the narrowness of political parties versus the needs of a democratic state. He carefully distinguishes between the policies of Nazi leaders and the aspirations of most Germans, whose desire for prosperity, dynamic government, and national vigor did not include plans for war or complicity in genocide. The Germans, Raff asserts, were also victims, and he chides the Allies for the Hitlerite assumption that all Germans shared the same spirit. The book concludes with an adept treatment of postwar, divided Germany, a product of another dualism, that between East and West.

The story of Germany is given immediacy by the inclusion of commentaries by contemporaries of the events recounted. The character sketches of Bismarck, William II, and Hitler given in the body of work are splendid. The most unusual feature of this national history is the addition of material on other countries to give perspective to German affairs. Thus the chapter on German industrialization begins with a survey of the British industrial revolution. The chapter on totalitarianism may not really distinguish it from other forms of autocracy, but the reader is made aware that what happened in Germany had parallels elsewhere. Curiously, Raff does not discuss Fascist Italy in this chapter.

There are a few other slips when Raff moves beyond the confines of Germany. Louis Napoleon was not elected to a ten-year term as France's president in 1848 but to a four-year term. Raff's account makes it seem that the intrusion of France's revolutionary armies into Nice, Savoy, the Rhineland, and the Netherlands in 1792 somehow preceded the Brunswick Manifesto and the overthrow of Louis XVI and that the Jacobin dictatorship was the immediate product of the fall of the monarchy.

Although Raff's discussions of Enlightenment political theory, economic liberalism, and Marx's ideas are exemplary, his sections on intellectual and cultural topics generally are weak, a flaw this textbook shares with many others. To say that Herder "pointed out the role of history in human development" or that Art Nouveau "furthered the trend toward aestheticism and symbolism" is, of course, correct but does not provide the nonspecialist with enough information. Weimar culture is ignored except for a list of artists, authors, and composers proscribed by the Nazis, but the reader really cannot tell why these individuals were condemned.

Finally, the maps are impossible. They are so small and so murky as to be without value.

Yet these drawbacks are more than compensated for by the lucidity and intelligence of Raff's analysis of political, economic, and social themes. Whoever judges Donald Detwiler's Germany history too truncated and Koppel Pinson's fine, old classic too difficult for students should find Raff's *A History of Germany* a welcome alternative to both.

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