

Richard Bessel, ed. *Life in the Third Reich*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1987. Pp. xix, 124. Cloth, \$24.95; paper, \$7.95.

In *Life in the Third Reich*, Richard Bessel edits and contributes to a collection of essays on the Nazi experience. The contributors, eight of them, have written brief, undocumented essays on subjects to do with Hitler's Germany. In the majority of cases those authors have written on the same or allied subjects at greater length elsewhere, and thus the lack of footnotes and bibliography (except for a brief "Suggestions for Further Reading") is not disabling.

The essays cover such varied subjects as political violence, village life, youth, Hitler's public image, the nature of the Nazi state, the treatment of Jews, and the treatment of other social outcasts (*gemeinschaftsfremd*). The final one examines how ordinary people remember the Third Reich. The essays, as a group, therefore, do not attempt to present the Third Reich in any sort of full view, but only to illuminate some of its corners.

All the authors agree that one of the characteristics of the Nazi state was its lack of coherent organization or policy. When they look at the Nazi bureaucracy, several of the authors use, correctly, the analogy of feudal barons struggling for dominance. In fact, some go so far in this view that it is hard to imagine how the Germans did as well as they did in World War II.

Bessel's writers are uniformly interesting, particularly when they discuss matters that are seldom looked at in more general writings on the Third Reich. For example, Detlew Peukert describes rebellious youth, the "Edelweiss Pirates" and the "Swing Youth," who flouted their distaste for authority even in the early war years. Gerhard Wilke looks at life in a small village in northern Hesse and the effect that Nazism had on life there. The least satisfactory of the essays is that by Ian Kershaw, who attempts to explain the creation of Hitler's image, the Fuehrer cult; the deficiencies in his essay stem more from the inability of research tools to explain political leadership than from any shortcoming on Kershaw's part.

The book requires a substantial amount of background information to read and some degree of sophistication to interpret. Thus, it would serve very well as a subject for discussion in a seminar setting or in a course that focused strongly or exclusively on the Third Reich, but it would be less satisfactory as collateral reading in a more general course.

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Barbara Marshall. *The Origins of Post-War German Politics*. London, New York, and Sydney: Croom Helm, 1988. Pp. 221. Cloth, \$57.50.

In this monograph, Barbara Marshall, a Senior Lecturer in European History at the Polytechnic of North London, examines how the post-World War II political, social, and economic order developed within the Germany occupied by the western Allies. Expectations raised by its title notwithstanding, *The Origins of Post-War German Politics* focuses on British occupation policies in Hanover between the city's capture in April 1945 and the economic merger of the British and American zones in January 1947. Divided into two sections, it treats respectively the interregnum between April and August and the post-Potsdam period. After an opening chapter, which summarizes British preparations for the occupation and the establishment of the Military Government in Hanover, the next two describe local life and political developments before Potsdam. The three following chapters analyze British policies and practices regarding the democratization of local government, Works Councils and Trade Unions, and the revival of political parties, especially the Social Democratic Party (SDP).

Defeat of Hitler's Third Reich gave the Allies unprecedented opportunities to create new institutions in Germany, especially during a brief period immediately subsequent to the end of hostilities. A radically democratic and egalitarian order, however, did not emerge, and Marshall investigates, using Hanover as a case study, not only the role of the British and the Germans in this putative failure but also the question of whether the Allies actually prevented its creation, imposing instead a bourgeois and capitalistic democracy. Marshall finds that British occupation policy, especially prior to Potsdam, lacked clearly articulated goals, other than security for the occupying forces, the restoration of law and order, the provision of food and other basic services, denazification, and the democratization of German institutions. Confronted with the staggering problems of a Hanover in ruins, the understaffed Military Government adopted a pragmatic approach, postponing questions of long-term reform. British delegation of administrative responsibilities to Germans also

compromised denazification by employing from necessity not preference officials with controversial Nazi pasts.

British policies, Marshall concludes, constrained further by financial and military weaknesses at the war's end, by pressing world-wide commitments, and by American disapproval of radical innovations, neither actively promoted nor hindered the emergence of a new order. Explicit here is the book's underlying theme, a regret that both the British and the Germans let slip an opportunity to insure that post-war institutions would be fundamentally unlike those of either the Weimar Republic or the Nazi period.

Historians dealing with controversial recent events, especially those in periods like post-war Germany that still provoke emotional responses from participants as well as scholars, confront unresolvable problems of source material. Although the notes and bibliography indicate that Marshall has consulted an abundance of primary and secondary sources, printed as well as oral, British as well as German, she concedes the limitations of the materials used and specifies the documents closed to her, such as the Lower Saxony denazification proceedings. While the writing, albeit occasionally labored and awkward, is generally clear as is the organization, there are persistent and annoying errors (e.g. Trueman for Truman, p. 11).

Scholars and graduate students who specialize in recent German history will appreciate the factual details assembled for this case study of British occupation policies. Undergraduates will find the book less useful, largely because this narrowly conceived study is not set within the larger context of allied occupation policies and practices in Germany as a whole.

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Robert W. Brown

Robert D. Marcus & David Burner, eds. *America Firsthand*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989. Volume I: *From Settlement to Reconstruction*. Pp. xii, 311. Paper, \$16.00. Volume II: *From Reconstruction to the Present*. Pp. xiv, 366. Paper, \$16.00.

The editors of *America Firsthand* believe that the "past is the present writ small." In this two-volume set designed as supplementary reading for the survey course, Robert Marcus and David Burner have dug deeply into the historical past to find diary entries, letters, speeches, government documents, and specialized excerpts from vintage literature and monographs to illustrate that life today bears some marked similarities to the generations of yesteryear.

Volume One, sub-titled *From Settlement to Reconstruction*, is composed of four parts: "Discovery and Early Settlement;" "From Colonies to Republic;" "The Growth of a New Nation;" and "Reform, Slavery, Civil War, and Reconstruction." While the sections (and corresponding time periods) are fairly standard, many of the readings, especially those that are more social than economic and political, are new and refreshing fare. Contrary to earlier textbooks, this anthology contains information on women (Mary Jemison, Harriet Robinson, Jane Lewis, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth); on Indians (Father Paul Le Jeune, King Philip, Black Hawk); on Blacks (Nat Turner, Frederick Douglass, Felix Haywood); on church and school (Caleb Bingham and Peter Cartwright); and, of course, traditional fare, such as great men (Christopher Columbus, John Smith, William Bradford, Cotton Mather, Tom Paine, George Washington).

Volume Two, entitled *From Reconstruction to the Present*, contains four sections: "Reconstruction and the Western Frontier;" "An Age of Economic Expansion;" "Roots of the Modern Era;" and "America Since 1945." With richer material to draw upon, the second half of *America Firsthand* is substantially longer than the first. In addition to items on women and minorities, this book contains documents on immigration (O.E. Rolvaag, Upton Sinclair), reform movements (Mother Jones, Jacob Riis, Lincoln Steffens, John F. Kennedy, Tom Hayden), and the downtrodden (the Grimes family, Otis G. Lynch, Jessie de la Cruz). The selections are generally edited for interest as well as length.

In conclusion, *America Firsthand* is an excellent addition to burgeoning lists of textual curricula for the freshman survey course. Both volumes give almost equal weight to the four divisions therein and a concerted effort has been made to illustrate history "from the bottom up" as opposed to "from the top down." Then, too, a serious attempt has been made to retain the context of those selections that have been shortened. The editors have also expended some time in creating discussion questions for each of the subdivisions, eliminating the need for an instructor's manual. Finally, the publishers selected community college, college, and university instructors, both men and women, from California to Texas and from Ohio to Arizona, to review the manuscript as a whole. This process, undoubtedly, identified some errors and fostered some public relations activity for future adoptions.