

fear or coercion, to what extent from consent? Welch believes that he can answer these questions in part by studying the nature, function, and effectiveness of Nazi propaganda.

Earlier studies of Nazi propaganda, Welch claims, focused on the nature and purposes of Nazi propaganda, while largely ignoring its reception by the German population. Welch's book intends to correct this void. His main contention is that while propaganda played an important part in mobilizing support for the NSDAP, propaganda alone could not have sustained the Nazi Party and its ideology over twelve years. Rather, when Nazi propaganda reflected the aspirations of the German people, it succeeded. When it did not, or when propaganda strayed too far from the daily realities of the German people, then it ran into indifference or opposition. Nazi propaganda, therefore, was as much about "confirming" as about "converting" public opinion.

This short book is divided into two major parts. The first part looks at the theory and organizational structure of Nazi propaganda. The longer second part intends to examine the differentiated reactions of the public to the major themes and campaigns of Nazi propaganda between 1933-1945. Welch is best at discussing Nazi propaganda from the top, its major themes and changing patterns from the perspective of the propaganda ministry. He is less effective when examining popular reaction to the propaganda campaigns. He frequently cites the two main sources for German public opinion of the period, the various Security Service (SD) reports and the underground reports from the Social Democratic Party, but the book does not make clear when the German population, or some important segment of it, truly consents to Nazi policy and, when it does, whether it is out of indifference, acquiescence, or endorsement.

There is little in this short book that will be new to specialists in the field, but there are several aspects that will be useful to college instructors and their students. Part one contains an excellent section on the nature and role of propaganda in general and of Nazi propaganda in particular. This part contains long quotes from Goebbels that are excerpted from speeches and writings included in full in the back of the book.

I found the chapter on "Propaganda and Public Opinion" in part two to be the most interesting and useful, even if it did not quite live up to its promises. In discussing the main themes of Nazi propaganda—a united national community, racial purity, and charismatic leadership—Welch offers us a clear and penetrating discussion of the bases of Nazi ideology. His notes for this chapter, and for the book's introduction, cite key articles and books on Nazi propaganda and on various other historical debates centering on Nazi Germany. His discussion of these debates and the bibliographical citations will be invaluable for both instructors and advanced undergraduate and graduate students.

The book ends somewhat incongruously with a postscript on the current historians' controversy in Germany that focuses on how to treat the Nazi regime within the context of German history and atrocities perpetrated by other regimes in the twentieth century. Like so much else in this book, it is clear and interesting, but one wonders whether it belongs here.

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Donna Harsch. *German Social Democracy and the Rise of Nazism.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993. Pp. xiv, 398. Cloth, \$45.00.

In the 1928 Reichstag elections, the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) won 29.8% of the vote and Adolf Hitler's National Socialist Party (NSDAP) just 2.6%. But the German economic and political situation rapidly deteriorated, and in three elections between 1930 and 1932, the SPD's share dropped to 20.7%, while that of the NSDAP rose to 37.8%, before

slipping to 33.6% in November 1932. Similarly, in 1928, the SPD was the "largest, best organized, and most disciplined political party" in Germany with 937,000 members, and it was the hub of the "multispoked movement" called Social Democracy, which enrolled millions more in the Allgemeiner Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (ADGB), the Reichsbanner, and various cultural and cooperative organizations. In contrast, Nazi Party membership was about 100,000. Yet, it was Hitler who was appointed German Chancellor on January 30, 1933, and within six months, most Social Democratic institutions had been banned or disbanded, and activities by the SPD had been declared illegal, all without serious resistance. Donna Harsch has taken on the important task of analyzing this tragic defeat of German Social Democracy.

Historians often attribute the Social Democratic failure to counter the Nazi movement and preserve the Republic to a complex of factors outside the SPD's control, such as, for example, an entrenched anti-democratic bias amongst the middle and upper classes or enmity with the German Communist Party (KPD). While not minimizing these constraints, Harsch analyzes Social Democratic political behavior during the last five years of the Weimar Republic by studying the internal debates and workings of the SPD and the complex relations between it and such fraternal organizations as the ADGB and the Reichsbanner, giving particular attention to party structure, ideology, and Social Democratic "political culture." She concludes that not bureaucratic inertia or ideology but "the dynamism of Social Democracy's internal life led, paradoxically, to its external mobility."

Much of *German Social Democracy and the Rise of Nazism* consists of detailed enquiries into how Social Democracy responded to particular political and economic challenges between 1928 and 1933, from which a central theme emerges. In 1928, when the SPD's Hermann Müller was Chancellor and other party members occupied key positions in national and regional governments, including Prussia, the SPD, uncertain about its political identity and its role in the political process, "was unable to use its power productively," and it suffered from "an ongoing lack of strategy." In 1930, when faced with an electorate disturbed by political paralysis, the consequences of the Depression, and the Nazi challenge, the "SPD had no strategy to attract these millions of voters." Likewise, the SPD failed to respond when unemployment exceeded six million in February 1932. It decided not to resist the Reich coup that ousted Otto Braun's SPD government of Prussia in July, and its Iron Front, an extra-parliamentary effort to defend the republic from extremist attacks, collapsed due to leadership failure. And during the months preceding Hitler's appointment as Chancellor, the SPD leadership was characterized by "helplessness and confusion." Throughout, Harsch observes, Social Democratic leaders recognized and analyzed the Nazi threat, but misunderstood its nature. If individual Social Democratic failures can be explained by inadequate leadership, miscalculation, and missed opportunities, their cumulative effect was to help make Hitler's triumph possible.

Harsch's conclusions, as both the extensive notes and bibliography attest, are based upon thorough research in published as well as unpublished sources. The very merits of this detailed and revisionist study of the inner dynamics of Social Democracy, however, make it difficult reading for those uninitiated into the intricacies of Weimar politics. Nonetheless, Harsch's contention that the advent of National Socialism was not inevitable and can therefore be attributed in part to Social Democratic weaknesses raises questions about a political party's responsibility for the defense of democratic institutions and processes and the need to counter unscrupulous demagogues, who, like Hitler, manipulate democratic procedures to destroy democracy. In the Social Democratic failure accordingly are warnings for countries with fragile democratic traditions that confront pronounced political and economic crises.