

Comptes rendus — Book Reviews

WINFRIED SCHULZE. — *Reich und Türkengefahr im späten 16. Jahrhundert. Studien zu den politischen und gesellschaftlichen Auswirkungen einer äusseren Bedrohung.* Munich: C. H. Beck Verlag, 1978. Pp. 417.

ALFRED SCHRÖCKER. — *Ein Schönborn im Reich. Studien zur Reichspolitik des Fürstbischofs Lothar Franz von Schönborn (1655-1729).* Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1978. Pp. 148.

NOTKER HAMMERSTEIN. — *Aufklärung und Katholisches Reich. Untersuchungen zur Universitätsreform und Politik katholischer Territorien des Heiligen Römischen Reichs deutscher Nation im 18. Jahrhundert.* Berlin: Duncker & Humblot Verlag, 1977, Pp. 276.

RICHARD VAN DÜLMEN. — *Der Geheimbund der Illuminaten.* 2nd ed. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog Verlag, 1977. Pp. 453.

I

Why did the Holy Roman Empire survive for so long? Why did it finally collapse in the era of Napoleon I in 1806? Why did it not break down in 1548, 1648 or 1748? In the last fifteen years West German historians have produced an historiographical revolution. Major reinterpretations now cover the whole of the early modern period, 1521-1806. No longer can we be satisfied with charting the rise of Austria and Prussia as an explanation even of the salient features, let alone of the whole, of early modern German history. The traditional view that the religious and civil wars destroyed the federal system of the Old Reich during the Thirty Years' War flies in the face of the detailed evidence from the sources on which the new interpretations are based. The fundamental difference between the older and the newer views is one of *emphasis* in the *interpretation* of the existing facts, and about the facts themselves there is very little disagreement. The traditional approach of historians before 1945 was to concentrate on the relatively short periods of civil and foreign war under Charles V, Rudolf II, Ferdinand II, Leopold I and Maria Theresia for their interpretation of the whole early modern period. The new approach, especially since about 1965, has been to concentrate on the long years between these military and social upheavals, showing to what extent territorial rulers of large and small states played their parts as responsible politicians working within the structure of the Holy Roman Empire to succeed *in the long term* in keeping respectively the Turks and the French out of Habsburg Austria in the southeast, and out of Rhineland Germany in the west, during the sixteenth, seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. It was achieved despite the great difficulties on internal dissent in matters of religion which gave rise to unwelcome heterodoxies with which early modern European states were thought generally at the time to be politically unable to cope without splitting asunder. Despite these major set-backs the Holy Roman Empire survived as a loose confederal agglomeration of many hundred small states representing all the forms of

government that the western tradition has ever known — from urban and rural republics as diverse as Nuremberg and Dithmarschen, through to theocracies as diverse as Calvinist and Lutheran “nunneries” like Herford and Quedlinburg and on to archbishoprics, bishoprics, abbeys, priories, lordships, counties, dukedoms, electorates and kingdoms; ecclesiastical and lay, elected and inherited, oligarchic and autocratic. Seventeenth-century Germany was both a microcosm of international law and diplomacy looking towards the future in global politics, as well as the happy hunting-ground of constitutional lawyers puzzled by the endless complexity and diversity of territorial states sporting systems of public law that not even Aristotle could have dreamed of in the worst *cauchemar*.

The new interpretations of the multifariously *vigorous* early modern Holy Roman Empire are based upon two interlocking institutions only now being examined thoroughly for the first time in terms of what they were to the people operating them at the time. The first is the Old Reich federal system of fiscalism and taxation for overall military defence purposes. The second is the way in which that system was operated especially in West Germany through regional politics in the Imperial Circles or *Reichskreise*, above all those of Franconia, Swabia, the Electoral Rhineland, Lower-Rhine Westphalia, Lower Saxony and the Upper Rhineland.

The work of Winfried Schulze is an important new contribution to the first problem: that of Alfred Schröcker highlights the second. The great advantage in reading these two works together is that no longer does the Thirty Years' War remain a great divide between two fundamentally different ways of running German society and politics. Instead, the period 1618-48 merely finds its place as a hiatus in the politics of the Holy Roman Empire as a whole which was made good with the restoration of Reich federal, national and regional legislatures, courts, tax and military systems once again linking the 1650s with the 1610s. Schulze and Schröcker provide answers to the question why the Holy Roman Empire lasted for so long, whereas the books by Notker Hammerstein and Richard van Dülmen try to answer the question why the Holy Roman Empire effectively collapsed at the end of the eighteenth century; not sooner and not later. Whereas Schulze and Schröcker provide much more adequate answers to their question from the administrative and diplomatic archives, Hammerstein and van Dülmen delve into the history of education and of political ideas which is ultimately far less satisfactory in providing an answer to their overriding question. Indeed, despite the careful reconstruction of political events which forms a classic in the new historiography — K. O. Aretin's *Heiliges Römisches Reich 1776-1806* (Wiesbaden, 1967) — the best explanation of how the traditional politics of the eighteenth-century Holy Roman Empire was sapped of its strength lies in Klaus Epstein's *The Genesis of German Conservatism* (Princeton, 1966). Epstein still provides the only satisfactory linking of the history of ideas with the political and administrative history that we have in any language when we wish to know why the Holy Roman Empire disappeared around the year 1800. Schulze and Schröcker explain the successful continuity of the Old Reich. Hammerstein and van Dülmen do not explain the discontinuity and failure of the Old Reich but only lead the reader towards that crucial question in the light of his prior reading of works like those of Schulze and Schröcker which for the first time in the German academic historiographical tradition of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries seem to make sense of early modern German society and politics.

II

Winfried Schulze's *Reich und Türkengefahr* is an important new interpretation of the constitutional development of the German Old Reich and its component

territories in the later sixteenth century. It documents convincingly the process whereby the Habsburg emperors had very little freedom of manoeuvre in making any significant concessions to the Protestants after 1555. In their turn the Protestants were unable to withhold Turk taxes until well into the first decade of the seventeenth century. So there *was* unity in the Old Reich despite three antagonistic “parties” in the German federal organs of government — satisfied Lutherans led by Saxony; aggressively legitimate Catholics led by the Austrian Habsburgs and their rivals, the Bavarian Wittelsbachs; and violently illegal Calvinists led by the Palatinate. Schulze concludes that, despite all the harsh controversy surrounding religious conflict and the disposal of ecclesiastical property, resulting in the breakdown of law and order at overall Reich level, there is little doubt that the Turk threat was the truly significant element holding the political order together with a considerable degree of success (p. 366). This occurred especially in the 1590s despite the failure of the Protestants to accept majority decisions as binding in matters of federal taxation and defence. In other words, the Turk wars and the consolidation of the military frontier under Maximilian II and Rudolf II kept the German Old Reich alive. Peace in 1606 spelled the end of internal German federal harmony.

The Turk wars of the later sixteenth century produced a new form of military taxation granted via the regional imperial federal Circles (*Reichskreise*), and not through the *Reichstag*, the circumvention of which A. H. Loebl had already begun to explore in articles published before he was killed in the First World War. Schulze now clinches the argument from the source materials. *Firstly*, Rudolf II's Circle politics centred on Franconia in the 1590s, a policy disliked by territorial rulers, whose imperial assembly rights were thereby being by-passed. *Secondly*, Reich tax grants continued to develop institutions of assembly and taxation at territorial state level, but increasingly only in the prerogative, paternalist and absolutist interests of territorial rulers and not of territorial subjects, however prominent the latter may have been as nobles or town councillors. *Thirdly*, territorial rulers used the federal institutions of the Old Reich to overcome the opposition to their paternalist style of government evinced by their own territorial estates, *Landtage* or parliamentary assemblies, and finance committees, thereby asserting executive power over all the powerful feudal corporations and families within their sphere of high jurisdiction, reducing one and all to the status of privileged subjects. “Frondeur feudalism” was never given a chance because of the way territorial rulers clung to, and effectively used, the Old Reich federal system of politics, which was essential to their new, state-building fiscalism. In other words without the Turk wars, fought by regional Circle-based Old Reich federalism, there could not have been the absolutist territorial state development that has been so meticulously and well traced by F. L. Carsten in his seminal work, *Princes and Parliaments in Germany* (London, 1959). *Fourthly*, territorial rulers operating at Old Reich level initiated the extraordinary tax-grant system for territorial-state subjects, who were inevitably at times seriously over-taxed in such a way that they could neither appeal for reform nor develop a code of moral outrage and justice which would allow them to reform or rebel. The days were over when the Bible could be used to legitimate rebellion on the basis of divine law as happened in the 1520s and '30s. Sixty years later the Old Reich had begun to prove its effectiveness as a federal oligarchy of territorial rulers, despite the religious split, as *Reichsunmittelbare*, exercising their prerogative powers each separately as sovereigns over all their own *reichsmittelbare*, territorial subjects.

When these *reichsunmittelbare* territorial-state rulers fell out with each other over matters of dynastic rivalry and religious disagreement, as happened

in the run up to the Thirty Years' War, the conflict could only be resolved on the basis of a return to the Old Reich federal institutions: those very checks and balances operated by laboriously mutual cooperation, which the fathers and grandfathers of the politicians who accepted the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 had in their turn negotiated. The result was a great success: the first internationally and legally recognized balance of power in Europe, well documented in the meticulously edited volumes of diplomatic correspondence and peace negotiations, the *Acta Pacis Westpholicae* (Münster, 1962ff). Without the experience of the tortuous compromises of Old Reich federal German internal politics since the 1550s in matters of internal and external security and defence, the foundations could not have been laid for the subsequent international concert that emerged in mid-seventeenth-century central Europe. The Austrian Habsburg contribution to this development at the territorial-state level has been carefully established in Winfried Schulze's previous monograph, *Landesdefension und Staatsbildung. Studien zum Kriegswesen des innerösterreichischen Territorialstaates 1564-1619* (Vienna, 1973). The Thirty Years' War in Germany is the key to understanding the seventeenth-century crisis, but that understanding can only come through the thorough investigation of Old Reich federal politics, especially in the later sixteenth century, in conjunction with the way in which it was exploited from within the Habsburg dynastic system above all at Prague and Vienna, rather than in Brussels or Madrid.

Schulze leads the return to the constitutional history of early modern Old Reich federal Germany in order to enable us more fully to understand the way in which Europe was being developed politically. Schulze has embarked on the most important and long-overdue objective that any historian of central Europe could now possibly undertake. The dispassionate question is "what was going on in Germany after the Reformation and before the Thirty Years' War, more widely between 1550 and 1620, more specifically between 1559 and 1606?" — to be explained from mundane fiscal and chancellery archives, and not, to start with, through the more exciting mystical and occult but confusing history of ideas as undertaken recently by R. J. Evans in his *Rudolf II* (Oxford, 1972) or Frances Yates in her *Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (London, 1972). There is a more pressing need to document the facts of German bureaucracy and not the flights of German fancy in this period. No one has done it, but Schulze now leads the way.

Alfred Schröcker helps the inquiry enormously by concentrating on a west German Catholic ecclesiastical traditionalist, who with Austrian Habsburg support once again revised the Old Reich regional federal Circle system in order to preserve the politics of the Holy Roman Empire in the century after the first great efforts of the 1590s. The Schönborns were Rhineland Franconian Imperial knights who remained Catholic, sending their sons into the cathedral chapters of the Counter-Reformation Church at Würzburg and Mainz. Canon Friedrich Georg (d. 1640) was also a successful private banker to many of the courts and municipalities that clustered around the Rhine and Main valleys. His cousin, Johann Philipp, having first been a canon since the 1620s, inherited and invested the family fortune to become elected ruling bishop at Würzburg in 1642 and Archbishop Elector of Mainz in 1647. As Archchancellor of the Holy Roman Empire, from 1647 to 1673, he reconstituted the federal politics of Western Germany after the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. From his base as leader of the Catholic ecclesiastical small states, Johann Philipp steered German federal politics between the aspirations of France, the Dutch, Swedes, Brandenburg Prussians, Guelphs, Bavarians, and Imperial Austrian Habsburgs with a considerable degree of success. In the next generation his nephew, Lothar Franz, worked a way through the ecclesiastical hierarchy, via the See of Bamberg, finally to steer

federal politics in a pro-Austrian manner as Archbishop of Mainz, from the time of the Spanish War of Succession through to 1729. Between 1719 and 1756 four nephews followed him as cathedral canons, subsequently becoming in their own right ruling bishops at Würzburg, Bamberg, Speyer, Constance, Worms and archiepiscopal Trier. In three generations, spanning the crucial years 1642-1756, this one family of imperial knights produced six ecclesiastical territorial rulers, all pluralists holding more than one bishopric at a time. In the era of Louis XIV's wars through to the *grand volte face* of European diplomacy caused by the Silesian Wars of Frederick II of Prussia, the Schönborns for more than a century kept the ecclesiastical small states of the Rhineland independent, above all increasingly by skilful alliance politics under Imperial Austrian Habsburg supervision. They based themselves upon regional defence associations, the *Reichskreise*, which pooled the resources of German splinter territories and turned them into a sizeable military and fiscal *force de frappe* using the consultative, imperial practice of Circle parliaments and Circle alliances, *Kreistage* and *Kreisassoziationen*.

For those who do not read German, five recent works are available in English which put this small-state federalism on the map, thereby superseding the traditional interpretation that the Thirty Years' War destroyed the effectiveness of the Holy Roman Empire in Germany. They are R. A. Wines, "Imperial Circles", *Journal of Modern History*, 39 (1967); R. H. Thompson, *Lothar Franz von Schönborn* (The Hague, 1973); G. Benecke, *Society and Politics in Germany, 1500-1750* (London, 1974); J. A. Vann and S. W. Rowan, eds, *The Old Reich. Essays on German Political Institutions 1495-1806* (Brussels, 1974); and J. A. Vann, *The Swabian Kreis* (Brussels, 1975). That the Holy Roman Empire or Old Reich survived as a loose confederation of autonomous small states especially between 1648 and 1756 was largely due to the organizing skills of one remarkable family of Catholic imperial knights — the Schönborns. The first thoroughly concise and well written summary of the Schönborn era in Old Reich politics has now been produced by Alfred Schröcker. It deserves to be read by everyone wishing to make sense of German small states' politics and society as a whole in the Baroque era. Through diplomacy and coercion Lothar Franz von Schönborn masterminded the regional Circle military system that kept the states of Rhineland Germany independent during and after the Spanish War of Succession. Schröcker locates this achievement at the centre of Old Reich federal politics which was underwritten by the Austrian Habsburgs of the day, to whom Lothar Franz remained loyal. That is why the Holy Roman Empire survived actively and consciously well into the eighteenth century. But why did it not survive the nineteenth century as well?

III

The notion that the Enlightenment destroyed the Holy Roman Empire in the later eighteenth century is very vague when contrasted with the realities of bureaucratic and institutional renewal — *Reichskreise*, *Türkensteuer*, *Reichshofrat*, *Reichskammergericht*, *Reichsfiskus*, and the like — which had led to its vigorous long-term survival in the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Notker Hammerstein is aware of this, and that is the strength of his book. Right from the start he handles the Enlightenment in terms of educational reform in the Catholic territories of the Rhineland, Franconia, East Swabia, Bavaria, and more briefly, Austria, where public law and its practical disciplines, ranging from statistics to accountancy, replaced theology as the more practically useful training for administrators seeking state employment. University reform is examined from the standpoint of Catholic territorial state survival via the process of political innovation.

Enlightenment and secular public service, rather than religious traditionalism and preaching-order-inspired pulpit control, were the new ideals of educational politics, which had been missing in Old Reich Germany with its loose, federal centre, and for which the territorial state universities had to find a substitute. There were after all no *Reich* universities, but only those of Bavaria, Austria, Würzburg, Saxony, Lower-Saxony, Cologne, Mainz, and so on. They introduced the Enlightenment into Germany at territorial state level, from the Protestant north downwards, and it was the princely absolutist form of Enlightenment that triumphed. However, republican imperial cities and aristocratic ecclesiastical territories also played an albeit diminishing role, which Hammerstein documents well for Würzburg during the Schönborn era up to the mid-eighteenth century. Where the Protestants at Halle and Göttingen may have led the way, the Catholic universities eventually also followed. The major question remains as to how the ecclesiastical territorial states coped with the problem of secular reform in their universities, since only Cologne resisted. Hammerstein covers fourteen Catholic institutions of higher education, admittedly by no means all within ecclesiastical states, which did reform themselves. Reform meant ultimately ridding oneself of Jesuits, rationalizing, secularizing and gaining a modicum of collective responsibility to treasury accountants, if not to actual collegial democratizing. Why then was that not sufficient to allow these states to survive under the mantle of Old Reich federalism, which the Schönborns, as outlined by Schröcker, had so vividly upheld up to the mid-eighteenth century in the heart of the Empire, in ecclesiastical Rhineland-Franconia? The problem remains one of external politics.

Whereas the threat of French involvement in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had strengthened German federal and inter-territorial consultative institutions, in the eighteenth century it undermined increasingly those very institutions because the threat changed from one that was external, military and despotic to one that was internal, egalitarian, populist and potentially dictatorial. There was little that fourteen Catholic universities partly representing the "public society" of Old Reich Germany could do to hold up such a deluge, especially when in the interest of efficient territorial-state mercantilism and cameralism native German dynasties encouraged secularization. Perhaps more valuable as a factor in keeping the Old Reich alive was the contribution of the mainly Protestant publicists like J. J. Moser, his son F. C. von Moser, and through to men like J. S. Pütter, whose great, last minute compilations of Old Reich laws and customs preserved the old ways of constitutional practice when the system was already moribund. This is further documented in the massive, basic work of Franz Wieacker, *Privatrechtsgeschichte der Neuzeit* (2nd ed., Göttingen, 1967). Hammerstein instead prefers to examine something new and narrower: the role of the Enlightenment in Catholic higher education where we can see in detail how the "sacred spirit" of the Old Reich was undermined. Even before the main revolutionary French onslaught of the late 1790s, little was left of the Old Reich federal, traditional and religious loyalty and concord, as seen in the following secular territorial-state, educational purpose as expressed in 1791 by Freiburg University to its Habsburg territorial rulers and paymasters:

Quite correctly, one tends to divide the supporters of the Enlightenment into academics and common public. The first group leads the second: it shows the way. In the lecture hall an idea is hammered out for twenty, thirty and more years before the public accepts and adopts it as its own point of view. How long did it not take the schools to prepare the way for the reforms under Maria Theresia and Joseph II, and how unfortunate were not results in the Southern Netherlands precisely because prior preparation via the classroom was not undertaken with sufficient care? Hence, how important to the state is not the general school and its administrators, for they shape the attitudes of the nation

in matters of religion, justice, love of fatherland and ruling prince... Yet one has often been accused of upsetting the order of nature by making Enlightenment the guiding principle of academics, and thereby been thought to have been impeding the progress of knowledge. (p. 12)

When the podium replaced the pulpit, then truly the territorial state broke free from the Old Reich. The 1790s finally saw that break.

Yet well before Napoleon struck, Catholic German states were no longer inculcating loyalty to the Old Reich within their educational systems. Hammerstein documents this psychological shift in political emphasis very well, but how is one to translate it into an understanding of the political actions and events that took place in late eighteenth-century Germany? The history of ideas even in its more practical form as the history of state educational institutions can only ever explain so much, leaving a sensitive gap between the plausible and the convincing in the understanding of politics. The fact remains that we still cannot fully explain why the Old Reich failed along with its handling of religion and tradition in German public life generally between 1770 and 1820, and more specifically from 1799 to 1806.

Perhaps secular secret societies did the trick where more palatable anti-Jesuit, anti-theological and pro-bureaucratic and legal, constitutional, educational policies had only led the way? As Klaus Epstein might say, that is an easy explanation acceptable only to Romantic reactionary conservatives. But then party politics did begin in a secretive and illegal manner before the Napoleonic era in Germany, and it was precisely in enlightened Catholic Bavaria, at Ingolstadt and at Munich, that the start was made in party politics for Germany as a whole. This is the subject of Richard van Dülmen's book.

The association of *Illuminati* fanned out from Ingolstadt, where it was founded in 1776 by Adam Weishaupt, a professor of canon law and a former Jesuit. By using reason and moral persuasion it attempted to infiltrate the ranks of the territorial states' urban, cultural, educational and civil service élite. Its aim was to replace the depraved ideologies of religion and monarchism with the freedom and equality of moral, secular man. By 1778 Weishaupt had joined forces with Adolf von Knigge, a Freemason who denounced monarchy and aristocracy. Proscribed in 1785 by the Munich government, the *Illuminati* became a secret society and spread all over Germany. About two thousand influential people were involved in its rituals until the end of the eighteenth century. As a forerunner of modern, secular state party politics, it sought to influence higher servants of absolutist governments to be moralistic and idealistic, forming them into reading and discussion groups, openly for nine years and then clandestinely for another fourteen (1776-99).

Van Dülmen has used official sources, above all, the Bavarian police archives, to document the process whereby the *Illuminati* constituted themselves, presenting samples of their oaths, internal loyalties, statutes, instructions, correspondence, reports and decrees. He generously assesses their achievements as lying somewhere between reality and Utopia. How could the state provide a perfect social and political system for its subjects: an ideal then as now (pp. 133-40)? The *Illuminati* were politically naïve and ineffective, except in one long-term sense. They did help to pioneer the forms and methods of what came to be the party machine in nineteenth-century German politics. The names of those who were most influential in this process are listed with their classical nick-names (pp. 439-53). Although van Dülmen is at pains to point out that the *Illuminati* were only an intellectual pressure group he does stress the increasing importance in their debates and writings that was laid upon the paradox of exercising violence and

power in the name of a great moral rectitude in order to overcome the existing *ancien régime*. At the end of it all, in 1799, the year of Napoleon in Germany, Weishaupt wrote that he had never thought to overthrow the state but rather wished for nothing other than that which each good and sensible government must desire, namely that morality be given a new mission (*der Moral ein neues Interesse*) to improve the future by means of education, thereby setting to rights all the world's abuses. The way to achieve this was by means of a change of heart and will, not by evermore cunning technical improvements in government: *Sitten und Meinungen* and not *Staatsklugheit* were now the order of the day. In this task, priests and princes and absolutist constitutions were an encumbrance. But what was to be done? Was revolution to overthrow everything and drive out violence with violence, tyranny with tyranny? No. Every kind of violent reform was suspect in that nothing could be achieved as long as man remained tied to his existing passions. Wisdom was needed to bring in a rational new age (pp. 138-39).

Adam Weishaupt had taken the name of "Spartacus" within his movement. He lived to be almost as old as Goethe and ended his days as a privy councillor at the court in Saxony-Gotha — a Mozartian Jacobin attuned to the form and not the substance of *Realpolitik* as the sacral Old Reich gave way in people's minds to the actions of nationalism and industrialization. The formal, rigid institutionalization, spying and counter-attack of *Illuminati*, their character assessments, personal files and *curricula vitae* have remained the tools of modern party politics and state service. As an example, the secret report on the quality of Franz Xaver Zwack's loyalty to the movement, dated the last day of December 1776, is reproduced after page 216 by van Dülmen. It is divided into name, age, place of birth, domicile, status, physical appearance, moral character, religion, reliability, education, practical skills, hobbies, friends, social contacts, reading and writing interests, name for the purposes of secret correspondence, date of joining, how recruited and what membership, if any, within other societies, main faults, the date by which first exercises were to be submitted (that is, party work tasks), how wealthy, when and what subscription dues were paid; detailed list of what pamphlets already provided, any enemies, any patrons? The files of modern institutional life had arrived along with the dubious consolation of spurious individualism.

So now we have at least two ingredients of the answer as to why the Old Reich failed in the eighteenth century. Hammerstein documents the sense of political inadequacy that is created when tradition is kept going by the mere gimmicks and technicalities of education and government manipulation of society. Van Dülmen shows the reaction which thereafter sets in as the younger intelligentsia lose faith in traditional social change and pioneer their own, too naïve, rationalist alternatives. The political order is subverted first by enlightened paternalists and then by democratic rationalists. The weak federal system of the post-1521, post-1555, post-1648 Holy Roman Empire could not hope to survive beyond the doubting generation of the 1770s, but did the break with the past have to be quite so extreme, so anti-traditional? The worst legacy of 1770-1820 to German history was the extremism of those Romantic nationalists who claimed to be organic traditionalists and conservatives: they, least of all, understood the Old Reich.

IV

To summarize, at state one an aristocratic Catholic, traditional ruling élite centred on the Rhineland and backed by Vienna ran the Holy Roman Empire before and after the Thirty Years' War. They operated the Circle defence system backed by Old Reich fiscalism, consultative assemblies and law courts. The imperial

knights, the low nobility of the territories and the patricians of the larger towns and of the imperial cities especially, operated this federal system. The territorial rulers sanctioned it but there was very little institutional flexibility within the Old Reich.

At stage two, in the eighteenth century, this society secularized itself by splitting into increasingly sovereign territorial units, each reforming its own laws, church and education with little regard for the federal whole. The process created cameralists and legal-technological "meritocrats" on the one side and secret societies of hopelessly idealistic moralists on the other. The ruling class split into traditional and rebellious intellectuals. That led to the end of the spirit of loyalty to Old Reich sacral federalism. However, stage one is now being documented from the practical political sources much more effectively than stage two. Nevertheless, all through the early modern era some very important politicians do emerge: from federal treasurer Geizkofler, to imperial archchancellor Schönborn, to educational commissioner Ickstatt, privy councillor Weishaupt and city administrator Knigge.

The question remains: why was social change so difficult to effect in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries? The survival of the Old Reich has always been a major obstacle to comprehending the transition from feudal to modern times in central Europe. Yet we must continue our efforts to link the administrative and intellectual history of the politically powerful élites with the wider social groups from which they emerged, and which influenced their styles of rule. Then we have to modify our understanding of those wider social formations in the light of the actual government practices that emerged among the powerful. Here we encounter another problem, namely that early modern German social historians, as a relatively new breed, have tended to remain overwhelmed by their archival sources, tackling usually only very small geographical areas, localities and groups. It is high time now to link this piecemeal understanding of local communities, their social structures and vital statistics of birth, marriage, death, immigration, profession, economy, family, health and survival, to the more centralized, constitutional and legal frameworks, in which leaders of these communities operated princely territories, town councils and the federal whole that was still the Holy Roman Empire.

Three areas of social history at least may now be delineated. *Firstly*, there is the study of the nobility with the problems of ennoblement and the rise of princely service in the expanding government systems of state under absolutism, mercantilism and cameralism. The history of successful groups within and across their own regions, expanding even beyond confessional and ideological barriers because of the skills and services they were able to monopolize, has to be merged into the political and social system as a whole. Indeed, successful families shared that system, and only in cooperation with or reaction to them can the *direction* of social change be understood. We have to link the authors reviewed here to the study of families, élites and localities, and that means returning to an examination, as social historians, of the events of regional and federal political, constitutional, religious, and educational history. A useful recent attempt to do this at a regional level is H. Reif, *Westfälischer Adel* (Göttingen, 1979), which concentrates on patterns of education, privilege and influence among the leading social group, who were being made increasingly redundant in practical administrative and managerial terms across several territorial states and provinces after the later eighteenth century.

Secondly, the very fruitful study of urban communities has given us the overall view that already before the Thirty Years' War most German markets and business were contracting, or switching their long-distance trade to a more in-

tensive exploitation of their own localities. In an excellent survey of the local archives, Christopher Friedrichs, *Urban Society in an Age of War: Nördlingen, 1580-1720* (Princeton, 1979), shows that a thriving Northern Swabian woollen textile industry was hit by warfare, and that the town involved had to concentrate more on the local food and drink industry in order to redeploy its manufacturing skills and survive. The wars of Louis XIV and of Leopold I, especially the Turk Wars and the War of the Spanish Succession from the 1670s until the 1710s, gave no respite to the tax-payers in the town. New forms of enterprise appeared by undercutting the costs of guild and craft manufacture, by ignoring the narrower laws of mercantilism operated by the town council — and getting away with it, since the whole economy generated no successful alternatives. The case of the Wörner family of Nördlingen in the late seventeenth century is one of German capitalism growing out of economic and social adversity. The development came precisely because capital was so scarce that, in order to obtain it, entrepreneurs had to rediscipline their work-force in more rigorously unpleasant and socially unjust ways. In Nördlingen the immediate result was bad labour relations, strikes and riots. The new bosses won these confrontations in the teeth of opposition from the town council above them, and from the journeymen and guildsmen beneath them in the existing social hierarchy. The long-term result was success for the new methods, since the only seeming alternative was continued economic stagnation and decline of the whole fabric of Nördlingen town.

Nördlingen was typical of the majority of small and middling, landlocked German urban centres just before and after 1700. They were concerned with survival at the local level, and inevitably turned in on themselves. At best their leadership went in for piecemeal family status privilege, often purchased from surrounding princely chancelleries, or even from the Imperial chancelleries at Vienna and Mainz. That process, called *freiwillige Gerichtsbarkeit*, had been in existence for centuries, and it was not to reach its apogee until the late nineteenth century as a caricature of success in industrialized Prussia-Germany. A far too brief look at some early modern examples of this legitimizing process is in G. Benecke, "Ennoblement and Privilege in Early Modern Germany", *History*, 56 (1971), and then again even more narrowly through the opportunities of non-noble princely service in one family, "Absolutism and the Middle Class: The Case of a Northwest German Burgher Family in the 17th Century", *Histoire sociale — Social History*, V (April 1972). The early modern quietist, careerist, conformist German urban leadership is well examined particularly in G. Soliday, *A Community in Conflict. Frankfurt Society in the 17th and Early 18th Centuries* (Hanover, New Hampshire, 1974), as well as more generally in Mack Walker's seminal *German Home Towns. Community, State and General Estate, 1648-1871* (Ithaca, New York, 1971).

The case studies of the Imperial cities of Nördlingen and Frankfurt-am-Main are important to general social history because they show above all that where a traditional ruling élite was burgher and middle-class — that is, where it was free to act autonomously without internal interference from high clergy, nobles, ruling princes and Emperors — it did *not* spearhead the move towards *laissez-faire* capitalism. Also the *Illuminati*, as enlightened intellectuals, arose in Catholic, aristocratic Bavaria, and *not* in the Protestant Imperial City-Republics like Nördlingen and Frankfurt-am-Main. The new business methods were successfully enforced in the Ruhr region under absolutist-paternalist Prussian and Palatine princely administrations, and *not* in the ancient, free Hanseatic cities of Bremen, Lübeck and Hamburg.

Thirdly, the development of élite families of nobility, burgher and enterpriser has to be explained with reference not only to the legal and educational systems under which they trained and employed themselves to develop their own ad-

vantages into privileges, but also with reference to the wider tax-paying peasant and artisan groups in town-market and countryside who actively or passively consented to this development. Social change came as a result of new and illicit economic practices. The putting-out industry in textiles, as is well known, destroyed guild restrictions of the towns and exploited cheaper labour in the villages and farms. The enclosures, woodland, waterway and game laws were operated with especial harshness after the mid-seventeenth century by *Amtmänner* and Junkers under a prerogative "Justice of the Peace" and they led to very high levels of endemic violence in the countryside. For the Alpine Austrian lands, this is well brought out in all its folk-heroic hopelessness by G. Grüll, *Bauer, Herr und Landesfürst* (Graz, 1963). But resolution of conflict came in traditional feudal manner as compromise between ruler and ruled through the absolutist, expert territorial state and federal, Old Reich courts. Immediate success was achieved at the expense of longer term social change: privileges defended for too long led to an antiquated class structure plus an inability to reform by clinging to that which was traditionally cohesive and useful in the politics of the Old Reich. It was the price paid by the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries for the failure to find successful alternatives to Nördlingers like Daniel Wörner and his new industrial capitalism "through cheating in adversity", prevalent in the German towns around the 1690s. So equally, there was no respite from paying the social price within the political system of the enforced game laws, enclosure and land-use restrictions under the new managerial agrarian capitalism of improving landlords like W. H. von Hohberg, as brilliantly described by Otto Brunner in his *Adeliges Landleben und europäischer Geist* (Salzburg, 1949). It also operated through the eyes of the local authorities hunting the villainous underdog in the farms around Linz on the Danube in the 1660s, as portrayed from the archives, among other things, by G. Grüll, cited above.

The way in which these new men and methods — capitalistic labour use and manufacture in town and country — found practical cover or clandestine acceptance in the loose, federal system of the aristocratic, religious and feudal Holy Roman Empire can only be understood by asking social and economic historians to read the constitutional and cultural studies of the new school of early modern German history as exemplified by the work of Professors Schulze, Schröcker, Hammerstein and van Dülmen.

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PIERRE DOCKÈS. — *La libération médiévale*. Paris, Flammarion, 1979. 317 p.

Voilà un livre au titre fort prometteur publié par un professeur d'économie politique de l'Université de Lyon. Bien que n'étant pas historien, M. Dockès s'est intéressé à l'histoire économique par le biais surtout des théories économiques qui virent le jour aux XVI^e, XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles. Cette fois-ci, il s'attaque à la question fort importante du passage de l'esclavagisme au féodalisme. Il le fait en tentant de renverser non seulement les interprétations traditionnelles mais aussi certaines interprétations marxistes. En bref, pour lui, la société féodale serait née de l'opposition maîtres-esclaves, la lutte des uns contre les autres ayant été « portuse d'une société nouvelle pensée comme retour vers une communauté ... et l'ob-