

through these dangerous shoals only because they are not mentioned. Occasionally Mr. Knapp shows some awareness of the implications of his linear view of history, but in the main he is totally committed to its distortions and its simplicities.

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HANS-ULRICH WEHLER, ed. — *Der deutsche Bauernkrieg 1524-1526* (Sonderheft 1, *Geschichte und Gesellschaft, Zeitschrift für historische Sozialwissenschaft*), Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975.

The year 1975 was probably a turning point in the historiography of German social history written by both East and West Germans since the Second World War. For the first time there was the possibility of a certain amount of consensus growing between hitherto antagonistic sides, which is reflected in this collection of essays from ten West Germans, one Canadian and one American. It seems that both East and West now appreciate that the Peasant War of 1525 is the starting point of a common German tradition of 'underdog' or democratic history. Conferences and *Festschriften* commemorating its 450th anniversary marked for many scholars the turning point in a cold war between marxist-leninist and western-liberal viewpoints. The East Germans were allowed to attend at the Swabian town of Memmingen, from where the famous Twelve Articles of the rebellious peasants had originally been promulgated by the rebels, and both sides read papers to each other about the events of 1525.¹

But perhaps even more important is the above compendium edited by Wehler, which combines research techniques of our western positivist school of history with the ideas of the East Germans and their mentors, Marx and Engels. Although the collection loosely covers aspects of one particular civil war which effectively lasted only three years, and which failed to bring about any obvious change in German politics and public life, it marks a turning point in East-West German academic détente.² History and historiography are fruitfully combined, and the study that will make these events for the first time available to English speakers is now awaited.³

The last essay in the Wehler collection (pp. 303-354) is a useful bibliographical survey of some 300 new books and articles that have appeared in both Germanies in the last decade concerning the sociology of the 1520s above all in the southwest, Alpine, central and east-central German territories of the Holy Roman Empire. These works have established without doubt that what is traditionally called the German Peasant War of 1525 was the centre-piece of a political upheaval every bit as important as were in their ways the Revolt of the Netherlands, the English Revolutions of the seventeenth century, the French Revolutions of 1789 to 1871, and the Russian and continuing Chinese events of the twentieth century.

¹ P. BLICKLE, ed., *Revolte und Revolution in Europa* (Neue Folge, Beiheft 4, *Historische Zeitschrift*), (Munich: Oldenbourg Verlag, 1975).

² Much of this was already signalled in R. WOHLFEIL ed., *Reformation oder frühbürgerliche Revolution?* (Munich: Nymphenburger Verlag, 1972). From now on social historians of Germany who disregard the East German *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* will do so at the risk of becoming totally obsolete.

³ Janos BAK, ed., *The Peasant War of 1525 in Germany*, which is to be published as Part 1, Volume 3, of the *Journal of Peasant Studies*, and as a separate paperback by Frank Cass, London.

The East Germans talk of 1525 as a central European event of world-historical importance and they use Friedrich Engels as their starting point.⁴ We need not go quite that far. But as Professor Bak implies⁵, East and West Germans not only have a current problem of how to achieve détente in the heart of Europe, but also how to make best use of their massive and still growing economic power within EEC and Comecon respectively. How are they to justify their increasingly valuable aid and investment programmes in the developing parts of the world? By letting their academics create a peasant-artisan revolutionary tradition that goes back to the days of pre-industrial and late-feudal Germany in the sixteenth century they may uncover a tradition of politics as well as a dialectic of reform and revolution that will help to produce understanding between developing countries, United Nations organisations and rival East and West German aid-programmers under their respective government agencies, planning ahead to the world of the 1980s.

We should not rule out the truly unusual situation whereby sixteenth century history and historians become an important part of the think-tank that is now modern German détente and hence part of the future shape of German politics in the world. The outcome may be awaited with some uncertainty as the two German states begin to play a political rôle more in tune with their economic power in international organisations. If there is ideological détente today then it is bound to be followed by nationalistic revival tomorrow. German historians and sociologists will probably once again play their part in influencing this revival. What forms such nationalisms would take are uncertain in view of the permanence of two German states but the mutual East-West German study of 1525 is potentially politically much more important than many of the early modern social historians engaged in it may be aware of.⁶ The point is not missed by Professor Wehler, who in his short Foreword talks of a *Zwischenbilanz* or part summing-up of views on the revolutionary seriousness of 1525 as being to a very great degree due to the theses and studies of marxist-leninist historians in the German Democratic Republic. Together with Peter Blickle, he now helps to lead a 'revisionist' West German school of social historians that are prepared to listen to and learn from East German colleagues, like Vogler, Laube and Heitz.⁷

There is a clear sense of the need for demarcation between Eastern and Western approaches to pre-industrial rural and urban European revolution, which is well outlined in the essay of Horst Buszello (pp. 105-128). He examines the political programmes of the 1525 rebels in terms of what they themselves sought to achieve. He notes that the Western line is to look for the politics that lay behind the articulated economic, religious and social demands. This line stresses the struggle for political power between autonomous village and market town communities on the one hand, and centralising territorial rulers, their officials and landlords, ecclesiastical as well as secular-dynastic, on the other.

The Eastern line is to turn all this the other way round. Political struggles served to secure the economic power of feudal landlords and overlords in the face

⁴ The best English edition with useful introduction is L. KRIEGER, ed., *Friedrich Engels. The German Revolutions. The Peasant War in Germany*, (Chicago: 1967).

⁵ Editor's introduction, *Journal of Peasant Studies*, Part 1, Volume 3.

⁶ See J. STARRELS, "Nationalism in the German Democratic Republic," *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism*, 2 (1974): 23-37; W. RIESE, "Anmerkungen zur DDR-Geschichtswissenschaft," *Deutsche Studien*, No. 52, vol. 13 (December 1975).

⁷ See G. HEITZ, G. VOGLER, A. LAUBE, eds., *Der Bauer im Klassenkampf*, (Berlin-GDR: 1975).

of an already cowardly and disunited bourgeoisie. Buszello now awaits further discussion to see if the two lines will come to a working arrangement, since it seems that they have reached agreement at least as two sides to the same coin. The future now lies in studying the threats to the rebels from those below their own group and class position. The work of scholars like Sabeian and Blaschke on the social structure of early modern German villages and land-tenures combined with detailed demography becomes crucial.

In the 1520s German villages were by no means socially cohesive. The peasants as an amalgam of richer serfs, poorer freemen and landless labourers or domestics were above all grouped into three economic sub-classes. The *Hufner* were the Kulak-types and on the whole formed a substantial minority of the population of the village. Then came the *Kötter* or small-farmers and cottagers, whose numbers were diminishing, while those of the even worse off *Gärtner* or *Häusler* (families with a shack and often far less than one-sixteenth of the land area farmed by a *Hufner*) continued to rise substantially, especially in the regions of partible inheritance in southwest Germany.⁸ Perhaps one major reason why the revolts of 1525 were so serious is that their leaders and often original supporters came from the *Hufner* class with their local market and business-craft links in the smaller towns of southwest, Alpine and central Germany. On the one hand the *Hufner* were being squeezed for more rent, services and dues by landlords, church and overlords who displayed insatiable appetites for warfare, bureaucracy and appropriate debts, and on the other hand a population boom in the cottages was challenging the richer peasants' rights to the best lands of the community with its common woods and meadows. Badgered by officials of the territorial state from above, and by their own labourers and poorer neighbours from below, the *Hufner* with their artisan and petty-bourgeois allies in the market towns made a last bid for continued local control over lands, commodities and marketing outlets.⁹

There is no more space to discuss further the Wehler collection here, but it is hoped that the contributors will develop their internal studies of peasant and burgher social structure, mentality and interdependence, still to be unravelled from the archives of the 1520s, by not shunning the methods of anthropology and developmental economics. We now know the facts in often the greatest of detail as displayed in the competent study of the repressive Swabian League by Thomas Seahere (pp. 129-167): the task is to understand this material also in the light of twentieth century experiences of revolt in pre-industrial, developing societies. In this task no-one should avoid coming to grips with the abiding values of the Peasant War of 1525 in Germany, nor this provocative *Zwischenbilanz* edited by Hans-Ulrich Wehler.

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⁸ D. SABEIAN, *The social background to the Peasants' War of 1525 in Southern Upper Swabia*, (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1969); the same author in *Peasant Studies Newsletter* (January 1974), and in *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 3 (1975): 76-88; K-H. BLASCHKE, 'Soziale Gliederung', *Zeitschrift für Agrargeschichte*, 1-2, (1953-4): 144-155; the same author, *Bevölkerungsgeschichte von Sachsen* (Weimar: 1967).

⁹ D. SABEIAN, "Markets, Uprisings and Leadership," *Peasant Studies Newsletter*, (July 1973): 17-19, using the methods of G.W. SKINNER, "Marketing and Social Structure in Rural China," *Journal of Asian Studies*, 24 (1964-5).

FRIEDRICH-WILHELM HENNING. — *Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte*, Volume One: *Das vorindustrielle Deutschland, 800 bis 1800*; Volume Two: *Die Industrialisierung in Deutschland, 1800 bis 1914*; Volume Three: *Das industrialisierte Deutschland, 1914 bis 1972*, Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh, Paderborn, 1973-4 (Universitäts-Taschenbücher, 145, 337, 398).

The economic and social history of central Europe is increasingly popular as an integral part of social studies in the teaching programmes of West Germany's old and new universities and institutes of higher education. There is therefore a great need for handbooks combining succinct text-book generalizations with useful bibliographies for further reading into problems, themes and debates. A starting point for teachers and students alike is the multi-authored *Handbuch der deutschen Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte* (Stuttgart: Union Verlag, 1971), where the contributions on agriculture by Wilhelm Abel, social structure by Wolfgang Zorn and the bibliographies on economic development by Zorn, Hermann Kellenbenz and Herbert Hassinger are particularly helpful. But so far this *Handbuch* stops short at the end of the eighteenth century. For the nineteenth and twentieth century we have to turn to other monographs such as Rolf Engelsing: *Sozial- und Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte Deutschlands* (Göttinger: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1973) who takes the story from the early middle Ages to the twentieth century in little more than two hundred readable and well formulated pages. Engelsing is already well-known in Germany for his studies of popular literacy and the lower classes from the sixteenth century onwards.¹ His brief social and economic history is full of ideas and much to be recommended as probably the best brief introduction at present to this branch of German history.

Another new work is by Friedrich-Wilhelm Henning, who teaches the subject at Cologne University. In three volumes he covers Germany from 800 to 1972. The divisions in the text come at 1800 (the end of the pre-industrial era), 1914 (the end of the process of becoming industrialized), which leaves the period after 1914 as the age of mature industrialization in Germany. The last volume ends with a Malthusian warning against overpopulation and over-use of the world's irreplaceable resources. The first volume starts with a description of the feudal system and the problem of periodization. The great divide is still seen as coming at the end of the eighteenth century with the first major signs of industrialization in the wake of agrarian change not only in western but also to a lesser extent in central Europe.

Henning's achievement impresses. He gives quite lengthy select bibliographies at the end of each volume, suitably divided into major areas of inquiry, and the works recommended are often very up-to-date. The real problem comes with Henning's own comments. It emerges that he is not very receptive to the new sociology and history which is so successfully liberalizing the study of the past in West Germany today. This applies above all to the internal history of Germany in the era of the industrial revolution and of Bismarck in the later nineteenth century. The seminal work of Hans-Ulrich Wehler is mentioned but quickly decried as piecemeal and unsystematic (II, pp. 258, 290) which is probably the opposite of what one might call Wehler's work. Important studies like those of Helmut Böhme are partly included without bibliographical comment, and crucial works concerning the primacy of home affairs that originally allowed social and economic history to come into its own in very recent times, such as the rediscovery of the essays of Eckhart Kehr, and studies edited by Michael

¹ Cf. R. ENGELSING, *Analphabetentum und Lektüre* (Stuttgart: Metzler Verlag, 1973); and the same author, *Zur Sozialgeschichte deutscher Mittel- und Unterschichten*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1973).

Stürmer and H-U. Wehler, showing the integration of politics and economics in home affairs, are passed over in silence. Henning's directions to the reader are idiosyncratic and must be treated with care: they are unsuitable for students starting the subject, although the series in which the work appears is intended precisely for that market. What of the text?

Alas it is the same story here, made worse by the fact that Henning has used a fragmented lecture-note technique to present his material. This makes for bland assertion of arbitrary facts and figures. There is a singular absence of argument that would make themes understandable to the reader and hence encourage him to think for himself. The whole work is a riot of facts and received opinions to be absorbed by hapless students who have yet another course to pass and credit to notch — depressing. One example may suffice here. Friedrich Lütge's views on an economic and demographic crisis *before* the Thirty Years' War are stated without further discussion of the thorny debate that has still not been resolved in this important area of German historiography (I, pp. 238ff. Instead of using space to introduce this debate, we are given an anecdotal tour around Skokloster where the Swedish General Wrangel stored his German and central European booty. This is indicative of the work as a whole with its undiluted, spasmodic notes in varying sizes of print and italics, making for tedious reading by buttoning up the whole subject rather than leading to any further questioning of a constructive sort. Henning's trilogy is best avoided as very dry and often trivial. It purports to be of use to the beginner and can really only be read by the cautious and persevering who already know something about the subject.

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