

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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