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German History before Hitler: The Debate about the German *Sonderweg*

What is the place of National Socialism in German history? What were its historical roots, and what did its victory — and its defeat — mean for German history after 1945? How can this ‘German catastrophe’ (Meinecke) be interpreted in a comparative perspective? Such questions have been at the centre of many scholarly and non-scholarly debates, most recently in the so-called West German *Historikerstreit* of 1986, and will continue to occupy, disturb and divide historians and others, particularly in Germany.¹

One way of answering these questions is to refer to the concept of a German *Sonderweg*. First, we shall reconstruct the *Sonderweg* thesis to the extent that it is a meaningful, though not necessarily accurate, contribution to historical understanding.² In recent years, the *Sonderweg* thesis has come under heavy attack, and I shall go on to present the main objections. Then I shall present my own views of this ongoing controversy.³

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, many German historians were convinced of the existence of a positive ‘German way’. In contrast to English and French historians, they liked to stress certain basic German specifics, consistent with the German geographical and historical pattern. The non-parliamentary character of the German ‘constitutional monarchy’ was seen as an asset, not as a liability. One was proud to have a strong statist tradition, a powerful and efficient civil service, a long history of reform from above — instead of revolution, laissez-faire, and party government. German ‘Kultur’ was considered different from and superior to western ‘Zivilisation’, a view which reached its zenith at the beginning of the first world war in the ‘ideas of 1914’. After the first world war, some scholars like Otto Hintze and Ernst Troeltsch started to relativize this positive variant of the *Sonderweg* thesis. After the second world war, it no longer sounded convincing. It ceased to inform the historians’

interpretation, and, *grosso modo*, has not been revived in German historiography.⁴

In its place, after 1945, a liberal-democratic, critical variant of the *Sonderweg* thesis emerged, one which had famous ancestors like Friedrich Engels and Max Weber. Basically, this critical version of the *Sonderweg* thesis tried to answer the question why — in contrast to comparable, highly developed countries in the west and the north — Germany became fascist and/or totalitarian in the general crisis of the 1920s and 1930s. In this way, the National Socialist experience became the focus of historical interpretation and reflection. The attempt to explain this experience in a comparative way, the attempt to understand it as an undeniable though terrible part of one's own historical heritage and, at the same time, the attempt to criticize and to overcome this historical burden — this was, implicitly or explicitly, the focal point and driving force of the *Sonderweg* argument which promised to link interpretations of the past with experiences of the present and needs of the future.

Certainly, nobody denied the great importance of the *short-term* factors contributing to the early collapse of Weimar and the rise of National Socialism. Who could have overlooked the consequences of the first world war and the humiliating defeat which was not really accepted by most Germans? Who could have denied that the economic disturbances, the inflation, the difficulties of international trade and, finally, the Great Depression greatly contributed to the problems of the first German republic and to the rise of Hitler?

But, at the same time, historians looked back to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and identified, by explicit or implicit comparison with England, France, North America or 'the West', peculiarities of German history, structures and processes, conditions and experiences which — of course — were not thought necessarily to have led directly to National Socialism but which, in the long run, hindered the development of liberal democracy and ultimately facilitated the rise of fascism. A wide range of scholars contributed to this argument without, however, necessarily using the word 'Sonderweg'.

Helmut Plessner spoke of the 'verspätete Nation', the belated process of nation-building largely from above, and historians have argued that nationalism consequently played a particularly aggressive, rightist and destructive role in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Germany. Ernst Fraenkel, the young Karl-Dietrich Bracher, Gerhard A. Ritter, M. Rainer Lepsius and others described long-term weaknesses of the *Kaiserreich's* system of government: blocked

parliamentarization, a very rigid and fragmented party system, and other factors which became manifest problems of the Weimar system of government and contributed to its malfunctioning. Leonard Krieger, Fritz Stern, George Mosse and Kurt Sontheimer stressed the illiberal, anti-pluralist elements of German political culture on which the nazis were able to build. Hans Rosenberg and others demonstrated convincingly that élites of pre-industrial origin, particularly the *Junker*, the large agrarian landowners east of the river Elbe, and senior civil servants, retained much power and influence well into the twentieth century. In the long run, they stood in the way of liberal democratization and truly representative government; a case in point, cited by Heiner Winkler among others, was the detrimental role played by agrarian interests in the deep crisis of 1930–3. Bismarck's way of framing the nation state from above, with 'blood and iron', added to the political and social weight of the officer corps which, in the Prussian tradition, was already strong and not in any way controlled by the people's representatives. Together with the old élites, there survived many traditional ('pre-industrial') norms, mentalities and life-styles (e.g. authoritarian patterns and the anti-proletarian claims of the lower-middle classes), as well as militaristic elements in the political culture of the middle and upper classes — e.g. the 'Reserveoffizier'. Max Weber, among others, criticized the 'feudalization' of the upper bourgeoisie, which was thought to have accepted not only aristocratic dominance in the field of politics but also aristocratic values and life-styles instead of sticking to its middle-class pride. Without the experience of a successful revolution from below, confronted with a long tradition of bureaucratic, government-guided reform and challenged by an increasingly powerful proletarian movement from below, the German *Bürgertum* appeared to be relatively weak and 'unbürgerlich', when compared with the west. The *Kaiserreich* — according to the influential interpretation of Hans-Ulrich Wehler — appeared to be a strange mixture of highly successful capitalist industrialization and socio-economic modernization on the one hand, and of surviving pre-industrial institutions, power relations and cultures on the other — an unstable mixture, whose internal tensions led to much internal oppression and manipulation, and to a rather aggressive foreign policy. In this context, Germany's special responsibility for the outbreak of the first world war has been stressed by Fritz Fischer and his students.⁵

Admittedly, the first world war, Germany's defeat and the revolution of 1918/19 deeply challenged and modified this constellation.

The old 'Obrigkeitsstaat', the civil service and the military lost much of their former legitimacy, the old élites were partly replaced, parliamentary democracy finally emerged, with organized labour one of the winners. Social Democracy split but moved into power, and the evolution of a modern welfare state advanced quickly. *But*, so the *Sonderweg* argument goes, much of the old legacy survived and contributed to the particular weakness of Weimar democracy, and to the fact that it collapsed in the Great Depression while other, more stable democracies in the west survived.

There is certainly much evidence to support this type of argument. Parliamentarization had been blocked for so long that in the 1920s it did not work smoothly and was ill-equipped to deal with the deep social tensions which had built up in the aftermath of the war and under the impact of the economic crisis. The basic Wilhelminian characteristics of the party system survived, but these parties were not accustomed to playing the game of politics and forging the compromises needed in the new form of government. Traditional orientations and high expectations had survived among large sections of the élites — the Junkers, the civil service, the officer corps, the judiciary and parts of the industrial bourgeoisie — while a deep conflict had developed between those more traditional, pre-democratic, pre-modern orientations and claims on the one hand, and Weimar realities on the other. This helps to explain why large parts of the ruling classes, of the economic, cultural and administrative élites, remained sceptical or hostile towards the new democratic republic — thus greatly contributing to its early collapse. In certain sections of the lower-middle classes, such as artisans, traditional state-oriented expectations survived, and were turned into resentment against the new system when it proved to be incapable of protecting them against the forces of modernization. Elements of illiberal culture survived — in spite of Berlin and its famous 'Weimar culture' — and the nazis were able to utilize them for their own purposes, as was the case with anti-semitism.

According to this view, it was not just the economic crisis, not simply class conflict and the perils of rapid modernization which undermined support for the republic and carried the nazi movement to power. Such 'modern' factors *were* important, but they were present in other countries as well. It was only in Germany that they were aggravated and reinforced by challenged, but surviving, structures and traditions of a pre-modern kind — the legacy of the *Sonderweg*.⁶

This is only a very brief description of the *Sonderweg* thesis presented in a simplified form. Many historians have contributed to this line of thought, usually without using the word 'Sonderweg', and the above outline has not done justice to their individual contributions. It should also be stressed that this line of thought has never been accepted universally. There have always been objections, and such objections have accumulated in recent years. In actuality, the word 'Sonderweg' was used more frequently by those who opposed the *Sonderweg* thesis than by its defenders. The following paragraphs summarize their more interesting objections to the *Sonderweg* thesis.

1. Some historians have argued that it is one-sided to interpret modern German history *sub specie* 1933 (or 1933–45). Thomas Nipperdey was one of the first to stress that there are 'several continuities' in German history. According to this view, the more 1945 fades into the distance, the less self-evident it becomes to interpret nineteenth- and early twentieth-century German history primarily in relation to the breakdown of the first German republic and the victory of National Socialism. German history until 1933 is much more than just the antecedents (*Vorgeschichte*) of 1933. For example, it is also part of the antecedents of 1987, and a period of history in its own right as well.⁷ Others have argued that, with the growing distance of time, historians should stop staring at Hitler, free themselves from the 'shadow' of National Socialism, and develop a less constrained, more balanced view of German history as a whole.

2. One can argue that the concept of a *Sonderweg* poses many problems, since it presupposes the existence of a 'normal way' from which Germany's development departed: the word 'normal' being understood here in two possible ways, each equally problematic. If 'normal' means average, most likely or most frequent, it is difficult to demonstrate that the French or the English or 'the western' way represented normality. One can even argue that every country has its own 'Sonderweg'. And since the countries of western Europe and North America differ strongly from one another, it is difficult to speak of 'the west'. However, if 'normal' is used in the sense of a norm, or a normative model, it may be equally problematic to use the west as the model from which Germany departed. Does this not imply subjective value judgements and the danger of idealizing 'the west'? David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley have argued this line and were well received by those more conservative German journalists and scholars who prefer a more positive view of German national history.⁸ But a more critical attitude towards the model of western

modernization has been developed by the intellectual left as well. Vietnam played a role, weaknesses of the British system became evident, the ecological crisis and other experiences cast shadows on the project of western modernization. America is nowadays less of an admired, unquestioned model than it used to be only a quarter of a century ago. With rising doubts about 'the west', the *Sonderweg* thesis lost part of its self-evidence.

3. Another type of argument and research strategy — to do with changing interpretations of the rise of National Socialism — has modified the *Sonderweg* thesis, or at least can be seen as a consequence of this modification. On the one hand, new studies of voting behaviour seem to show that the lower-middle classes and particularly the white-collar salaried employees were less central to nazi support than previously thought.⁹ This might mean that the role of surviving pre-industrial mentalities in explaining nazi support was less paramount. Some historians have gone even further and have stressed the discontinuities and the perils of modernity as responsible for the early collapse of the Weimar Republic. More or less orthodox Marxist writers have always emphasized the class struggle in this respect and the role of capitalists and entrepreneurs.¹⁰ Others have stressed the social and cultural disintegration which resulted from accelerating change and the deep rupture of the first world war, and which facilitated the rise of totalitarian movements. The late Emil Lederer argued this line, and so have historians of totalitarianism from Hannah Arendt to Karl Dietrich Bracher.¹¹ Knut Borchardt has tried to show that it was the Weimar Republic's early and over-reaching move towards the interventionist welfare state which helped to delegitimize the Republic under conditions of economic crisis.¹² Others like Gerald D. Feldman and George Mosse have recently re-emphasized the great importance of short-term factors in explaining Weimar's difficulties and Hitler's rise: the war and its consequences, including its effect on the brutalization of mores and values; inflation; the world economic crisis, etc. If one stresses such factors, the long-term legacies of German history become less important.¹³

4. New arguments have tended to question the *Sonderweg* thesis with respect to the nineteenth century. Historians have stressed the modernity of the *Kaiserreich*: its achievements in the fields of science and architecture, its dynamic character and relative liberality in respect of the law, the press, theatre and other cultural institutions. Blackbourn and Eley have gone even further and have spoken of

bourgeois hegemony in the economic, social and cultural life of the *Kaiserreich*. Eley has tried to interpret Bismarck's founding of the *Reich* as a form of bourgeois revolution. This certainly goes too far, but the received thesis — that the *Kaiserreich* was a product of partial modernization, and that it comprised a modern economy under an antiquated political-cultural roof which supported itself by manipulation and repression — has indeed been shattered.¹⁴

Comparative arguments along the same lines have also cast doubt on other aspects of the *Sonderweg* thesis. Thus, for example, it may well have been the European rule rather than a German exception that the bourgeoisie did not become *the* ruling class (as it did perhaps in Belgium, the Netherlands, and later the United States). Detailed studies seem to show that the aristocratic influence on the high bourgeoisie was not more but *less* pronounced in Germany compared with England or France. If one compares middle-class self-government in English, French, German and Russian cities of the nineteenth century, there is no evidence of a particular weakness of bourgeois values and liberal practices in Germany.¹⁵

5. Finally, the version of the *Sonderweg* thesis outlined at the beginning of this essay is challenged by another, which stresses Germany's geographical location in the middle of Europe. This is an old argument, but it has been revived recently by authors like Hagen Schulze, Michael Stürmer and Klaus Hildebrand. They stress that the lack of a strong unified state in the middle of Europe was an essential part of the European balance of power throughout the early modern period and even after 1815. Founding a strong nation state in this part of the world was a risky business from the start, and could only succeed under Bismarck's genial and (particularly after 1871) conservative leadership. Unfortunately, so the argument goes, the conservative forces in the top ranks of the bureaucracy and other parts of the Empire's establishment were not strong enough. Liberal, democratic and populist forces gathered momentum, new types of non-conservative nationalism and imperialism emerged, the Empire tried to grow and to expand but, because of its specific geographic position, this caused alarm among the neighbouring powers and destabilized the international system, which in turn led to war. It is in this context of geography and international relations that historians like Hildebrand see a specific German '*Eigenweg*'. While the liberal *Sonderweg* thesis has stressed the illiberal, undemocratic, authoritarian and pre-modern aspects of the German system as responsible for its particular problems before and after the first world war, this

geopolitical version of the *Sonderweg* thesis turns the argument around: Germany was not sufficiently conservative, the traditional élites were not strong enough, populist nationalism from below, democratization and the imperialism of the liberals were responsible for a kind of dynamism which — in European terms — was not exceptional but too much for Germany's always endangered position in the middle of Europe.¹⁶

These five main arguments cast doubt on the received *Sonderweg* thesis, but do they warrant its abandonment? Have we to refine it? Must we reject the criticisms? In conclusion, we shall consider these questions by developing, first, a methodological and — in a broad sense — political point and, secondly, a more empirical observation.

To determine the proper place of National Socialism in German history and in a universal context continues to be one of the most crucial problems, perhaps *the* most crucial problem in German historical self-understanding. Of course, there are other problems as well. People direct various questions at history, and these questions change over time. German history is long and complex, and has its negative and positive dimensions. The answers of 1950 and 1960 have to be rethought some decades later. But the moral, political and anthropological weight of the nazi experience is such, and its effects on the following decades of German, European and world history are so far-reaching, that the explanation and understanding of National Socialism continues to be the central, most sensitive and controversial issue, both in scholarship and in the public domain.¹⁷

It is in this context, and only in this context, that the *Sonderweg* thesis continues to have value and justification. The term 'Sonderweg' is probably useless and should be avoided if we do comparative research with other questions in mind, e.g. if we compare regional or national industrialization processes in nineteenth-century Europe.¹⁸ Of course, in a certain sense, every country and every region has its own *Sonderweg*. It is also beyond doubt that German peculiarities look very different if we compare them with Central-Eastern Europe or with nineteenth- and twentieth-century Russia, rather than with western countries. One should reserve the *Sonderweg* concept (although not necessarily the misleading word) for the (comparative) discussion of one basic and startling fact, namely, that Germany turned into a fascist and totalitarian state while those countries in the west with which Germany likes to compare itself and with which it

should compare itself, did not — despite the fact that they were confronted with similar challenges and conditions.

Of course, such a discussion has normative implications. From the viewpoint of ‘fascism v. liberal democracy’ or ‘totalitarianism v. liberal democracy’, the performance of those western countries *was* better than Germany’s and therefore can serve as a *historical* (not abstract) model for comparative purposes. Doubtless one cannot *prove* scientifically that it is necessary to compare German development with French, English, Scandinavian or North American. But one can provide some arguments as to why it is reasonable for Germans to compare themselves with such western examples — and not only with Stalin’s dictatorships or with other genocides of the twentieth century — if we want to generate an appropriate understanding of the nazi catastrophe and its causes. With those western countries, after all, Germany has shared not only a similar degree of economic development and social modernization, but also basic traditions: the ideals of the Enlightenment, of constitutionalism and of the rule of law, of human rights and humanism. Despite this, Germany became fascist and totalitarian, while western countries did not. Why? With whom does one want to compare oneself? In private life and public debate as well as in historical research this is a decisive question. The choice one makes influences the results one obtains, and such a choice cannot be made without normative implications.¹⁹

The word ‘Sonderweg’ has produced many misunderstandings. Some English writers have used a more precise expression: ‘the German divergence from the west’. I prefer this phrase, for, when understood in this way, the idea of a German ‘Sonderweg’ makes sense, while in other respects it does not. But what about the more empirical objections against the *Sonderweg* thesis?

Probably no serious historian would argue that the peculiarities of German history stressed by the *Sonderweg* thesis — late nation-building, illiberal cultures, blocked parliamentarization, etc. — led directly and necessarily to 1933. There is no doubt that many other causal factors were involved — from the consequences of the lost war to the person of Adolf Hitler — and it may be that even at the end of 1932 the turn to National Socialism could still have been avoided.

Nevertheless, those structures and processes identified by the *Sonderweg* thesis did indeed facilitate the collapse of Weimar and, eventually, the victorious rise of nazism. Recent research has added new elements to this picture, thereby changing some of the emphasis, but it has not overthrown the basic position. The rejection of Weimar

by most of the élites, anti-democratic nationalism, the difficulties faced by the parliamentary system, the power of the landowners and the officer corps, illiberal elements in the political culture of Weimar, the weakness of pro-democratic forces — factors such as these partly explain what happened between 1930 and 1933 and were themselves conditioned or strengthened by previous processes and structures discussed in the *Sonderweg* literature.²⁰

I am not convinced by the new geopolitical *Sonderweg* thesis. It may identify specific difficulties of the German situation and it brings foreign policy back into the picture (which is to be welcomed). But it cannot really explain why this nation in the middle of Europe had to become so expansive in the first place. The thesis provides an unacceptable whitewash of the governing élites; it underestimates the rigidities and traditional aspects of the *Kaiserreich*; and it rests on the unproven assumption that a more thorough parliamentarization and democratization of the *Reich* would have made it even more unstable, imperialist and aggressive. Sometimes the thesis virtually embraces geographical determinism.²¹

Finally, one has to admit that some elements of the old *Sonderweg* thesis need to be revised. Probably the 'Feudalisierung des Grossbürgertums' was no German peculiarity. The weakness of liberalism in the nation as a whole was perhaps somewhat compensated for by the liberal strength of local self-government. While a genuinely representative constitution was lacking, civil law was truly liberal and 'bürgerlich'. And while the merchants and industrialists were comparatively weak and appeared relatively late in most of Germany, there was a strong 'Bildungsbürgertum' (although with a strong statist element). Certainly, the *Kaiserreich* interpretations have changed and comparative research is still under way.²²

However, two very important German peculiarities — compared with the west and important for the collapse of Weimar and the victory of National Socialism — are corroborated again and again by research. First, there is the particular timing and mode of nation-state building: largely from above and rather late, and at exactly the same time when two other major problems were on the historical agenda — namely, the constitutional question of parliamentarization, and the beginning of class conflict as a consequence of industrialization. Neither Britain, France nor the United States were confronted with this burdensome, overdemanding simultaneity of three fundamental problems. The largely detrimental role of nationalism in modern German history has to be seen against this background, which also

helps explain why liberalism was relatively weak in Germany and why the labour movement split away from liberalism so early.²³

Secondly, one can hardly overestimate the importance of the specific continuity of the bureaucratic tradition in Germany: a strong and efficient *Beamtentum*; a long record of reform from above; a strong *Obrigkeitsstaat* which could achieve much, and which was widely admired (not without cause), but which had to be paid for with a weakness of civic virtues and liberal practices. The bureaucratic tradition has penetrated many spheres of life: social stratification and class formation, the school system and the German *Bürgertum*, large enterprises and even the social theory of Max Weber and others. It facilitated the early rise of a pioneering welfare state, but it also helped block parliamentarization until 1918. State-oriented expectations were deeply ingrained in different strata and, whenever frustrated, could turn into anti-systemic protests. And bureaucratic tradition helps to explain why there was so little resistance to government-sponsored atrocities in the 1930s and 1940s.²⁴

Analytically speaking, one has to distinguish between (a) the weaknesses and collapse of the Weimar Republic; and (b) the rise and breakthrough of National Socialism. These are two different phenomena. This short essay has concentrated on the long-term causes of the early collapse of the Weimar Republic rather than on those of fascism and its roots in German history. This is not accidental. For the peculiarities of German history summarized under the label 'Sonderweg' contribute much more to explaining the weaknesses and the early collapse of the first German republic than to explaining National Socialism. The *Sonderweg* thesis may help to explain why there were so few barriers against the fascist or totalitarian challenge in Germany. But the *Sonderweg* thesis is much weaker in explaining fascism as such and what happened after 1933. National Socialism was part of a European phenomenon, an aspect of a more general challenge to liberal democracy in the inter-war period. Many aspects of National Socialism were new, and transcended the old German *Sonderweg* — which has finally come to an end, due to the catastrophe which it helped to bring about.²⁵

Notes

This paper was first given at the conference, 'Germany's Singularity? The "Sonderweg" Debate', held at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 30–31 March 1987.

1. Cf. 'Historikerstreit'. *Die Dokumentation der Kontroverse um die Einzigartigkeit der nationalsozialistischen Judenvernichtung* (München 1987). (This work contains forty-two contributions to this controversy.)

2. I shall not, therefore, deal with some older untenable positions. For example, it is not worthwhile discussing arguments which try to explain National Socialism in terms of a specific German 'national character', or which posit a direct continuity from Luther to Hitler.

3. Cf. J. Kocka, 'Der "deutsche Sonderweg" in der Diskussion', in *German Studies Review*, 5 (1982), 365–79; H. Grebing, *Der 'deutsche Sonderweg' in Europa 1806–1945. Eine Kritik* (Stuttgart 1986) (not very convincing, but with a good bibliography); and, most recently, St E. Aschheim, 'Nazism, Normalcy and the German Sonderweg', in *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, IV (November/December 1987). I shall not attempt an exhaustive survey of the literature, but instead discuss the main arguments and positions.

4. Cf. B. Faulenbach, *Die Ideologie des deutschen Weges. Die deutsche Geschichte in der Historiographie zwischen Kaiserreich und Nationalsozialismus* (München 1980).

5. Cf. H. Plessner, *Die verspätete Nation. Über die politische Verführbarkeit bürgerlichen Geistes* (Stuttgart 1959); E. Fraenkel, *Deutschland und die westlichen Demokratien* (Stuttgart 1964); K. D. Bracher, *Die Auflösung der Weimarer Republik* (Villingen 1955); G. A. Ritter, *Deutscher und britischer Parlamentarismus. Ein verfassungsgeschichtlicher Vergleich* (Tübingen 1962); M. R. Lepsius, 'Parteiensystem und Sozialstruktur. Zum Problem der Demokratisierung der deutschen Gesellschaft', in W. Abel et al. (eds), *Wirtschaft, Geschichte, Wirtschaftsgeschichte. Festschrift für Friedrich Lütke zum 65. Geburtstag* (Stuttgart 1966), 371–93; L. Krieger, *The German Idea of Freedom* (Boston 1957); Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair. A Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology* (Berkeley 1961); G. L. Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology. Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York 1964); K. Sontheimer, *Antidemokratisches Denken in der Weimarer Republik* (München 1962); H. Rosenberg, *Bureaucracy, Aristocracy and Autocracy. The Prussian Experience 1616–1815* (Cambridge, MA, 1958); id., 'Die Pseudodemokratisierung der Rittergutsbesitzerklasse' (1958), in id., *Machteliten und Wirtschaftskonjunkturen* (Göttingen 1978), 83–101; H. A. Winkler, 'Die "neue Linke" und der Faschismus. Zur Kritik neomarxistischer Theorien über den Nationalsozialismus', in id., *Revolution, Staat, Faschismus* (Göttingen 1978), 65–117. See also S. Volkov, *The Rise of Popular Antimodernism in Germany. The Urban Master Artisans, 1873–1896* (Princeton 1978); H. A. Winkler, *Mittelstand, Demokratie und Nationalsozialismus. Die politische Entwicklung von Handwerk und Kleinhandel in der Weimarer Republik* (Köln 1972); H.-J. Puhle, *Agrarbewegungen in kapitalistischen Industriegesellschaften* (Göttingen 1975); H.-U. Wehler, *Das Deutsche Kaiserreich 1871–1918* (Göttingen 1973, 5th ed. 1983); F. Fischer, *Bündnis der Eliten. Zur Kontinuität der Machtstrukturen in Deutschland 1871–1945* (Düsseldorf 1979). See also R. Dahrendorf, *Society and Democracy in Germany* (New York 1967); G. A. Craig, *Germany 1866–1945* (Oxford 1978). A recent original

contribution to the *Sonderweg* thesis is J. Herf, *Reactionary Modernism. Technology, Culture and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge 1984).

6. Cf. J. Kocka, 'Ursachen des Nationalsozialismus', in *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte. Beilage zur Wochenzeitung 'Das Parlament'*, B 25/80 (21 June 1980), 3–15; H. A. Winkler, 'Unternehmerverbände zwischen Ständeideologie und Nationalsozialismus', in id., *Liberalismus und Antiliberalismus. Studien zur politischen Sozialgeschichte des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts* (Göttingen 1979), 175–94. Also H. Möller, 'Parlamentarismus-Diskussion in der Weimarer Republik. Die Frage des "besonderen" Weges zum parlamentarischen Regierungssystem', in M. Funke et al. (eds), *Demokratie und Diktatur. Geist und Gestalt politischer Herrschaft in Deutschland und Europa* (Düsseldorf 1987), 140–57.

7. Cf. Th. Nipperdey, '1933 und die Kontinuität der deutschen Geschichte', *Historische Zeitschrift*, 227 (1978), 86–111.

8. D. Blackbourn and G. Eley, *Mythen deutscher Geschichtsschreibung* (Berlin 1980, revised English edition: *The Peculiarities of German History: Bourgeois Society and Politics in 19th-Century Germany*, Oxford 1984). See the positive reviews in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, No. 18, 22 January 1982 ('Die eingebildeten Leiden der Deutschen'); and in *Criticon. Deutsche Zeitschrift für Konservatives Denken*, 64 (March/April 1981), 86.

9. Cf. R. F. Hamilton, 'Hitler's Electoral Support: Recent Findings and Theoretical Implications', *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 11 (1986), 1–34; J. W. Falter, 'Die Wähler der NSDAP 1928–1933: Sozialstruktur und parteipolitische Herkunft', in W. Michalka (ed.), *Die nationalsozialistische Machtergreifung* (Paderborn 1984), 47–59. For the received thesis, see J. Kocka, *White-Collar Workers in America 1890–1940. A Social-Political History in International Perspective* (London 1980), 1–5, 251–67.

10. Cf. D. Eichholtz and K. Gossweiler (eds), *Faschismusforschung. Positionen, Probleme, Polemik* (Berlin [GDR] 1980).

11. Cf. E. Lederer, *State of the Masses. The Threat of the Classless Society* (New York 1940); M. R. Lepsius, 'From Fragmented Party Democracy to Government by Emergency Decree and National Socialist Takeover: Germany', in J. J. Linz and A. Stepan (eds), *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes: Europe* (Baltimore 1978), 34–79; K. D. Bracher, *Europa in der Krise. Innengeschichte und Weltpolitik seit 1917* (Frankfurt 1979), 119–28.

12. K. Borchardt, *Wachstum, Krisen, Handlungsspielräume der Wirtschaftspolitik. Studien zur Wirtschaftsgeschichte des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts* (Göttingen 1982), 165–205.

13. Cf. G. D. Feldman, 'The Weimar Republic: A Problem of Modernization?', *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, 26 (1986), 1–26; G. L. Mosse, 'Der Erste Weltkrieg und die Brutalisierung der Politik', in M. Funke et al. (eds), op. cit., 127–39.

14. Cf. Blackbourn and Eley, op. cit.; R. Evans (ed.), *Society and Politics in Wilhelmine Germany* (London 1978); G. Eley, *From Unification to Nazism. Reinterpreting the German Past* (London 1986); M. Stürmer, *Das ruhelose Reich. Deutschland 1866–1918* (Berlin 1983). H.-U. Wehler's contribution to J. Kocka (ed.), *Bürgertum und Bürgerlichkeit im 19. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen 1987), 243–80 ('Wie bürgerlich war das Deutsche Kaiserreich?') already reflects this shift of emphasis to a certain extent.

15. Cf. J. Kocka (ed.), *Arbeiter und Bürger im 19. Jahrhundert. Varianten ihres Verhältnisses im europäischen Vergleich* (München 1986), 335 ff. The results of a research project at the Center of Interdisciplinary Research of the University of

Bielefeld (on 'Bürgertum, Bürgerlichkeit und bürgerliche Gesellschaft. Das 19. Jahrhundert im europäischen Vergleich') will probably support these remarks.

16. Cf. Stürmer, op. cit.; H. Schulze, *Weimar. Deutschland 1917-1933* (Berlin 1982); K. Hildebrand, 'Der deutsche Eigenweg. Über das Problem der Normalität in der modernen Geschichte Deutschlands und Europas' in M. Funke et al. (eds), op. cit., 15-34.

17. See note 2 on the 'Historikerstreit'. See also K. D. Bracher, 'Zeitgeschichtliche Erfahrungen als aktuelles Problem', *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte. Beilage zur Wochenzeitung 'Das Parlament'*, B 11/87 (14 March 1987), 3-14.

18. For such a comparison, see H. Kaelble, 'Der Mythos von der rapiden Industrialisierung in Deutschland', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 9 (1983), 106-18.

19. In the 'Historikerstreit' (see note 2), Nolte, Hildebrand and Fest tended to compare Hitler's Germany with Stalin's Soviet Union and the holocaust with Pol Pot's régime. In contrast, the *Sonderweg* argument compares Germany with the west. In the first case, the comparison stresses *similarities* between various types of dictatorships, while in the second, differences and 'German uniqueness' are emphasized.

20. Good overviews include E. Kolb, *Die Weimarer Republik* (München 1984); and Feldman, op. cit.

21. Cf. J. Kocka, 'Hitler sollte nicht durch Stalin und Pol Pot verdrängt werden', in 'Historikerstreit', op. cit., 132-42, esp. 138-41.

22. See H. Kaelble, 'Wie feudal waren die deutschen Unternehmer im Kaiserreich? Ein Zwischenbericht', in R. Tilly (ed.), *Beiträge zur quantitativen vergleichenden Unternehmensgeschichte* (Stuttgart 1985), 148-71; F.M.L. Thompson, 'English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century' in P. Thane et al. (eds), *The Power of the Past. Essays for Eric Hobsbawm* (Cambridge 1984), 195-214; J. Reulecke, 'Formen bürgerlich-sozialen Engagements in Deutschland und England im 19. Jahrhundert', in J. Kocka (ed.), *Arbeiter und Bürger im 19. Jahrhundert*, op. cit., 261-86; D. Grimm's contribution to J. Kocka (ed.), *Bürger und Bürgerlichkeit im 19. Jahrhundert*, op. cit., 149-87 ('Bürgerlichkeit im Recht').

23. Cf. J. Kocka (ed.), *Europäische Arbeiterbewegungen im 19. Jahrhundert. Deutschland, Österreich, England und Frankreich im Vergleich* (Göttingen 1983), 5-20.

24. As an introduction, see J. Kocka, 'Capitalism and Bureaucracy in German Industrialization before 1914', *The Economic History Review*, 2nd ser. 33 (1981), 453-68.

25. See J. Kocka, '1945: Neubeginn oder Restauration?', in C. Stern and H. A. Winkler (eds), *Wendepunkte deutscher Geschichte 1848-1945* (Frankfurt 1979), 141-68.

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