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Weimar Germany and its Histories

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YEARS later, after the catastrophes of the Third Reich and World War II, Arnold Zweig remembered how he had returned home from another disaster, World War I. "With what hopes had we come back from the war!" he wrote.[1] Zweig recalled not just the catastrophe of total war, but also the élan of revolution. Like a demon, he threw himself into politics, then into his writing. "I have big works, wild works, great well-formed, monumental works in my head!," he wrote to his friend Helene Weyl in April 1919. "I want to write! Everything that I have done up until now is just a preamble."[2] And it was not to be "normal" writing. The times were of galloping stallions and wide-open furrows, and talent was everywhere. War and revolution had drawn people out of the confining security of bourgeois life. "The times have once again placed adventure in the center of daily life, making possible once more the great novel and the great story."[3]

One is tempted to respond—ah, but that was 1919, before Weimar's own catastrophes of civil war, hyperinflation, stabilization, depression, and political paralysis. But in the crisis year of 1923, the great architect Erich Mendelsohn was writing paeans to the "hard clang" of a machine's movements, the "metallic sheen" of its material, and the "precision of its rotations."[4] Mendelsohn understood very well that the republic fostered the celebration of modernity. In 1929, he wrote that it was "unthinkable that we can turn back time. . . . unthinkable that we leave unused the greatly broadened possibilities of technology. That we see the machine as the enemy of humanity, instead of as our powerful tool that we need to master."[5] The Weimar Republic, Mendelsohn knew, made possible

[1]Arnold Zweig, "Freundschaft mit Freud. Ein Bericht" (1947/48), in *Arnold Zweig, 1887–1968. Werk und Leben in Dokumenten und Bildern*, ed. Georg Wenzel (Berlin: Aufbau, 1978), 103–04, quotation 103.

[2]Arnold Zweig to Helene Weyl, April 4, 1919, in Arnold Zweig, Beatrice Zweig, and Helene Weyl, *Komm her, Wir lieben dich. Briefe einer ungewöhnlichen Freundschaft zu dritt*, ed. Ilse Lange (Berlin: Aufbau, 1996), 149–51, quotation 150.

[3]Arnold Zweig, "Theater, Drama, Politik" (January 10, 1921), in *Arnold Zweig*, ed. Wenzel, 115-18, quotation 117.

[4]Erich Mendelsohn, "Die internationale Übereinstimmung des neuen Baugedankens oder Dynamik und Funktion" (1923), in *Erich Mendelsohn. Gedankenwelten*, ed. Ita Heinze-Greenberg and Regina Stephan (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2000), 48–53, quotation 48–49.

[5]Erich Mendelsohn, "Das neuzeitliche Geschäftshaus" (1929), in *Erich Mendelsohn. Gedankenwelten*, ed. Heinze-Greenberg and Stephan, 96-103, quotation 103.

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the full deployment of the forms and materials of modernism. Municipal and state governments as well as private patrons had opened their coffers to modern architects. The triumphal assertion of modernist aesthetics emerged because the war had so discredited everything associated with the traditions of the *Kaiserreich* and because the Revolution of 1918–19 had vastly broadened the political and cultural imaginary. By the end of the 1920s, Mendelsohn presided over one of the largest and most successful architectural firms in Germany—another accomplishment made in Weimar and something that most likely would not have been possible for a Jew in Imperial Germany.[6]

These quotes from Zweig and Mendelsohn remind us of Weimar's great achievements. One can barely count the bristling and bracing paintings, novels, poems, philosophical treatises, theatrical stagings, and films that still, almost one hundred years later, move and engage us on every conceivable level—intellectually, aesthetically, emotionally, erotically. Workers won the eight-hour day (seven and one-half hours in the mines) and multiple forms of representation that had barely existed in the Kaiserreich. Germans lived in the most democratic setting they had ever experienced, with a raucous free press and an intense, lively streetscape of political theater. The social welfare state broadened considerably to encompass public health, sexuality, public housing, and unemployment insurance. Public transportation opened up the outskirts of cities and the countryside to people who spent hours laboring away inside factories and shops. Whether people had more and better sex is impossible to determine; certainly, they talked more openly about it, and women had greater choices in their lives than ever before.

We also know the underside to all of this: the deeply fractured society and polity that ensued, the political and economic counterattacks that rendered some of these achievements temporary or hollowed out their substance, the ultimate triumph of the Nazis. But it is important to recall Weimar's achievements not only because they are so often forgotten (except perhaps its glittering culture, and even that is so often depicted as if it were isolated from Weimar's other successes). It is also to make the point that precisely its *achievements* were the source of so many of the virulent attacks that ultimately buried the republic. The emancipatory potential of modern art, democratic practices, worker representation, modern public housing, and sex reform proved disorienting to many Germans and provided the Right and the Nazis in particular with great mobilizing possibilities. As Hans Mommsen rightly argued in his important book, the Weimar Republic did not collapse.[7] It was deliberately destroyed by

[6]Mendelsohn's firm employed more than forty people by the end of the 1920s. See Ita Heinze-Greenberg and Regina Stephan, eds., *Luise und Erich Mendelsohn. Eine Partnerschaft für die Kunst* (Ostfildern-Raut: Hatje Cantz, 2004), 109.

[7]Hans Mommsen, *The Rise and Fall of Weimar Democracy*, trans. Elborg Forster and Larry Eugene Jones (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

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incessant attacks from both the conventional and the radical Right. And the bases of those attacks were not only the catastrophes that the republic's proponents could not master; they were also the republic's great achievements.

The four interesting articles in this issue, each in its own way, point to the achievements of Weimar's polity and society. But before engaging them, it is worth considering more explicitly why the language of collapse and catastrophe and the republic as mere prelude to the Third Reich has so dominated our understanding of Weimar Germany through all the decades since its passing. In the post-World War II period, the scholarship in German and English focused predominantly on the demise of the Weimar Republic and the Nazi *Machtergreifung*. Weimar's history was only significant as a failed experiment that paved the way for the Nazi takeover.[8] The four contributors make reference to this prevailing understanding in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). But they neglect, I believe, two other critical sources that also constructed a narrative of Weimar as doomed and degenerate: the intellectual émigrés, especially those who landed in the United States, and the German Democratic Republic.

Weimar as dreary, defeated, and dystopic was the émigrés' *retrospective* account of their own biographies. But that was not how the émigrés experienced Weimar. As they lived the 1920s, they felt a sense of possibility, professional advancement, and personal liberation. As with Mendelsohn, Weimar offered them grand opportunities in which so many reveled. Another architect, Bruno Taut, had not been able to build anything until the middle years of the Weimar Republic even though he had been trained and licensed before the war.[9] Among historians, Felix Gilbert's memoir, perhaps exceptionally, conveys the excitement of the Weimar years, even in its end phase. For Gilbert, Weimar was about youth and independence.[10]

Later on, trying to make sense of the German catastrophe and their own very personal experiences of displacement and disorientation, they came to see

[8]For some of the early works that established the interpretive frame of doom and collapse, see S. William Halperin, *Germany Tried Democracy: A Political History of the Reich from 1918 to 1933* (1946; New York: Norton, 1965); Karl Dietrich Bracher, *Die Auflösung der Weimarer Republik. Eine Studie zum Problem des Machtverfalls in der Demokratie*, 5th ed. (1955; Droste: Düsseldorf, 1984); *Der Weg in die Diktatur* (Munich: Piper, 1962), translated into English as *The Path to Dictatorship, 1918–1933: Ten Essays by German Scholars*, trans. John Conway (New York: Anchor, 1966); Martin Broszat, *Hitler and the Collapse of Weimar Germany*, trans. V. R. Berghahn (1984; Leamington Spa: Berg, 1987), though the German original is different since the title uses *Zerstörung* or "Destruction"; A. J. Nichols, *Weimar and the Rise of Hitler* (1968; New York: St. Martin's, 1991); Alex de Jonge, *The Weimar Chronicle: Prelude to Hitler* (New York: New American Library, 1978); and Michael N. Dobkowski and Isidor Wallimann, eds., *Radical Perspectives on the Rise of Fascism in Germany, 1919–1945* (New York: Monthly Review, 1989). David Abraham, *The Collapse of the Weimar Republic: Political Economy and Crisis*, 2nd ed. (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1986), also uses the "collapse" terminology, but the analysis is more about destruction led by the elites.

[9]On Taut and Mendelsohn, see Eric D. Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 169–206.

[10]See Felix Gilbert, *A European Past: Memoirs, 1905–1945* (New York: Norton, 1988).

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Weimar as mere prelude to the Third Reich. We remember the luminaries, such as Thomas Mann and Albert Einstein, who were feted when they arrived and easily found their footing (and institutional support!) in the strange world across the Atlantic. But more typical was someone such as Mendelsohn, who led a peripatetic existence after the heights of fame and prosperity in Weimar Germany. He had built a beautiful, modernist home in Berlin, but on March 31, 1933, he and his wife each packed a suitcase and with their daughter, wandered to Holland, Britain, Palestine, and, finally, the United States. He received some commissions in Palestine, but had a ten-year hiatus in the U.S. before he could build again. Never was he able to reestablish himself on the level he had attained in Weimar. Never again was he as creative as he had been in the 1920s and early 1930s.

From that kind of typical experience, many of the émigrés reevaluated Weimar. What had once been a source of inspiration became the basis for their own, very personal tragedies, as well as, of course, Germany's tragedy. Weimar as decay, depravity, and disaster, as prelude to the Third Reich, became their prevailing view. Peter Gay incorporated their understanding into his very influential *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider* and coupled it with his own, particular Freudian interpretation.[11] In the 1950s and 1960s, Gay was very close to many of the intellectual émigrés and their milieu at Columbia and the New School.[12] He absorbed their sensibility of Weimar as doomed and thereby helped to shape the prevalent understanding in North America.

The German Democratic Republic (GDR) had its own variant of Weimar as prelude to the Third Reich. Both were forms of capitalism, according to the official GDR account, the Third Reich only more open and virulent. Weimar had failed because Communists had not been able to seize power and transform state and society, largely because of the treasonous activities of Social Democrats. "Never again Weimar democracy!" was the death-bed proclamation of one Communist resister executed by the Nazis.[13] Moreover, Germans needed a tutelary state to help them shake off the temptation of fascism. If an authoritarian dictatorship as practiced by communists needed any greater rationale than Stalinism

[11] Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968).

[12] In a slightly different version published in the same year, Gay wrote in a note at the very beginning, "In the course of writing this essay, I have talked to a number of students and survivors of Weimar, to whom I am grateful for their time and effort." Peter Gay, "Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider," in *The Intellectual Migration: Europe and America, 1930–1960,* ed. Donald Fleming and Bernard Bailyn (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1968), 11–93, quote 11. In the book, that thought is removed to the preface and becomes "My writing of this book has been greatly facilitated by the generous cooperation of a number of survivors and students of Weimar." Gay, *Weimar Culture*, xv.

[13] Anton Saefkow, member of the KPD's "operative leadership" and leader of the Saefkow-Jacob-Bäustlein resistance group, in his political testament written shortly before his execution by the Nazis in 1944. Quoted in Siegfried Suckut, *Die Betriebsrätebewegung in der Soujetisch Besetzten Zone Deutschlands (1945–1948)* (Frankfurt am Main: Haag+Herchen, 1982), 172.

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already offered, the understanding of Weimar and National Socialist Germany as conjoined political systems provided it. Significantly, the system's founding fathers were Weimar veterans, and they, like the émigrés, experienced the catastrophe of National Socialism very directly and personally. The emancipated and prosperous communist future could only be built on the ruins of *both* Weimar and Nazi Germany.[14]

The Weimar narrative that prevailed in the Federal Republic might have been the most influential, but it did not, then, stand alone. In many ways it accorded with the émigré story and with the interpretation that was taught, researched, and propagandized in the GDR. The mantra "Bonn ist nicht Weimar" was certainly true. On virtually every significant count, the Federal Republic was different. Bonn was a far more stable and prosperous entity, characterized by its integration into the west, social welfare economy, and, until the 1968 breakthrough, conservative family values. As in the GDR, almost all of the Federal Republic's founders were Weimar veterans (one might say that Konrad Adenauer was a Kaiserreich veteran), but they distanced themselves from the more radical accomplishments of the 1920s, especially in the realm of bodies and sex. For them, separating themselves from Weimar was a necessary political act, and it was accompanied by a disparagement and denial of the Weimar Republic's accomplishments, a perspective that extended into the scholarly realm as well. Even Detlev Peukert's *Weimar Germany: The Crisis of Classical Modernity* could not surmount the narrative of inevitable doom, despite his protestations to the contrary.[15]

* * *

The four articles under consideration here significantly challenge the émigré, GDR, and FRG interpretations of Weimar, and do so from the cultural angle. Whether in the realms of intellectual life, sports associations, commemorations, or political symbols, all four authors see a republic that was more vital, that had deeper-running rivers of support, than we have generally understood.

Manuella Achilles offers a most interesting account of the creation of Constitution Day as a forum for feting the Weimar Republic. Despite all the travails that went into its creation and all the opposition, ultimately, Weimar's partisans succeeded in creating a national celebration. More than that: they created a set of symbols that served to establish an emotional attachment to the republic. Contrary to the oft-stated view, Weimar *was* a republic with republicans, even though Weimar's failures were used after 1945 as a "negative foil" to assert the achievements of the Federal Republic. As she writes, "the erasure of the republic's

[14]See Eric D. Weitz, *Creating German Communism, 1890–1990: From Popular Protest to Socialist State* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997).

[15]Detlev J. K. Peukert, *The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity*, trans. Richard Deveson (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992).

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democratic symbolism and practices from the historical record is typical of recollections deeply affected by the experience of National Socialism."[16] "Weimar republicans," Achilles concludes, "produced a constitutional culture that reanchored the nation in the democratic form. . . . Combining a passionate commitment to political reason with a sensitive and sensible representative style, Weimar republicans drew the symbolic contours of a liberal mass democracy."[17]

In similar fashion, Eric Bryden explores the *Geschichtspolitik* of the *Reichsbanner*. He shows how this republican paramilitary formation drew especially on the symbols of the Revolution of 1848–49 to affirm a continuous democratic culture in Germany, of which Weimar and the Reichsbanner were the most recent manifestations. As Bryden relates, in the Reichsbanner's telling, the Revolution of 1848–49 established a "foundational tradition" for Weimar democracy, a "moment of democratic self-assertion on the part of the German people."[18] In that way, the Reichsbanner challenged the ongoing devotion to the dynasties, the Hohenzollern in particular, as the locus of the German spirit. On that basis the Reichsbanner also rebutted the Right's charge that Weimar was "un-German." Importantly, the Reichsbanner extolled not just the democratic deliberations of the Frankfurt Parliament but it also drew on the symbolism of the barricades, of democracy as an armed, revolutionary act. Bryden depicts well the visual and spoken rituals that accompanied Reichsbanner demonstrations, the flags, speeches, and songs that paid homage to the martyrs and heroes of 1848.

Rüdiger Graf moves the discussion to the deployment of the word "crisis" both by contemporaries and scholars. Historians, he shows, have seamlessly and unquestioningly absorbed the term crisis from its widespread usage in the Weimar period. They convey a picture of one sector after another—politics, economics, culture—enveloped in disasters, which ultimately cohered into a total system crisis. Yet, Graf argues, there is something of a misconstrual at work, since among contemporaries "crisis" did not have purely negative connotations. In Hegelian fashion (a point Graf for some reason ignores), crises were understood to hold within themselves the possibility for renewal and advance. In that sense, Weimar was seen not just as crisis-prone, but as an important, perhaps even necessary transitional stage to something better, perhaps to even a more robust democracy. Crisis- and utopia-thinking ran together in Weimar.

[16]Manuela Achilles, "With a Passion for Reason: Celebrating the Constitution in Weimar Germany," *Central European History* 43, no. 4 (2010): 668. For a related argument, see Donna Harsch, "The Iron Front: Weimar Social Democracy between Tradition and Modernity," in *Between Reform and Revolution: Studies in German Socialism and Communism from 1840 to 1990*, ed. David E. Barclay and Eric D. Weitz (Providence, RI, and Oxford: Berghahn Publishers, 1998), 251–74.

[17]Achilles, "With a Passion for Reason," 689.

[18]Eric Bryden, "Heroes and Martyrs of the Republic: Reichsbanner *Geschichtspolitik* in Weimar Germany," *Central European History* 43, no. 4 (2010): 640.

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Ultimately, however, Graf argues, Weimar's protagonists and its critics boxed themselves into an "either-or" prescription of languishing in the crisis-ridden present or moving to the new world that was immanent in the existing conditions. Political options narrowed. Politics could no longer be a "normal" matter of interest-group bargaining; they could only be about the totality, *auf das Ganze*.

Nadine Rossol provides a sensitive reading of urban space and the forms of mass demonstrations and spectacles. She describes the intricate body movements, individual and collective, of Reichsbanner marches and sporting events and Constitution Day celebrations in which all the various elements came together. Left-wing and republican theater, choir, and dance directors were all involved. They emphasized collective rhythmic movements and choral singing that created a sense of belonging and wholeness in support of republican values. They sought to break the barriers between performers and spectators through audience participation. All this unfolded in large spaces, including sports arenas, creating a sense of monumentality. The Third Reich, Rossol argues, did not invent its aesthetics: "In contrast to the common modern perception, the Nazi Party rallies did not create aesthetically original features. Instead they combined and expanded, often on an unprecedented scale, well-known elements characteristic of political assemblies."[19] She concludes, "The National Socialists showed that the inclusive, spectacular, and representative forms tried out as part of visualizing the republic could be easily extended and reinterpreted to reflect the structure of their own political system."[20]

* * *

All four articles present a remarkably coherent picture of Weimar Germany. The republic was not just bedeviled and bedraggled, but had its supporters who did, indeed, have an emotional connection to the republic that they sought to develop in the society at large. To the extent that there was a Weimar "crisis," it was an intellectual construct that served as a platform for thinking the future, for imagining all sorts of moral and political arrangements that would further Weimar democracy.

So far so good. The four authors do significantly reshape our understanding of Weimar Germany. But in the end, we still remain confronted by the problem that Weimar's society and polity *were* deeply fractured, that Weimar failed, and that all the efforts at developing a democratic culture were only partly successful. Republican culture was for republicans; it seems not to have been successful in winning over Weimar's legions of opponents. Even Graf's compelling argument

[19]Nadine Rossol, "Performing the Nation: Sports, Spectacles, and Aesthetics in Germany, 1926–1936," *Central European History* 43, no. 4 (2010): 631.
[20]Ibid., 638.

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about the meaning of crisis neglects, finally, to address why certain narratives of crisis and renewal triumphed while others failed. The discursive analysis is interesting and significant, but circles around onto itself.

None of the authors discusses the many antirepublican commemorations and demonstrations that so marked the tableau of political life in the 1920s and early 1930s. National Day, Workers' Day, Tannenberg Day, *Stahlhelm* marches, Lenin-Liebknecht-Luxemburg commemorations, Nazi marches—how does one assess the entire panoply of public demonstrations, celebrations, and commemorations? The field of festivities had many similarities in form, a point raised only by Rossol, but even she only hints at the many critical issues involved. Did the similarity of demonstration forms trump the divergent ideological content with which these ceremonies were endowed? What, precisely, was the *meaning* of continuities between Weimar and Nazi popular aesthetics? And what is the meaning we inscribe to those moments when the forms were different? Rossol describes the central role of Hitler walking through Nuremberg, the meeting of leader and follower. No Weimar-era demonstration or commemoration had *that* critical element as a part of its rallies. But it is not at all clear, then, that Nazi forms were "traditional forms of political choreography" as opposed to Weimar's "innovative representative efforts."[21] What was traditional about Albert Speer's now-famed arc of lights? And what was innovative about Weimar's choral singing given the tradition of *tableaux vivants* in the prewar workers' movement?

Oddly, only Rossol discusses the gendered nature of demonstrations when she remarks that in Nazi rallies in the Third Reich, men and women performed in separate groups. But a lot more needs to be said. No matter what the political tendency, most of these very public demonstrations were highly masculinized as well, with disciplined columns of men marching up and down, often armed with the choice weapons (clubs, brass knuckles, stones) of the day. Moreover, the nature of demonstrations and commemorations was closely related to the dense character of urban space and the accessibility of mass transportation, which could move masses of people into the city or, in a few cases, to more remote sites such as Tannenberg.

Achilles, Bryden, and Rossol provide good descriptions of the body movements and oratory at these events. Yet no one comments on the media revolution that Germans experienced in the 1920s. By around 1930, the electrified projection of sound via microphones and speakers became possible and perhaps prevalent. (Oratory could also be carried on radio or depicted on film, but given the strict government regulation of both, this rarely, if ever, occurred.) That had to change the experience of participation. Who really heard Karl Liebknecht proclaim a socialist republic or Phillip Scheidemann announce a German republic

[21] Ibid., 638.

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on November 9, 1918? All four of the articles tell us a great deal about the production of culture, but little about its reception.

The emphasis on the cultural realm (broadly construed) in all four papers is revelatory, but also limiting. Critical issues in Weimar's history simply cannot be addressed exclusively from the cultural vantage point. Since 1990 we have lived through a massive double-shift (and not just yet another "turn") in the historical scholarship, from political economy to culture, from class to ethnicity, nationality, and race. In regard to German history, Kathleen Canning charts this shift exceedingly well in her commentary, though the shift, as she points out, has occurred in the discipline generally. On the general level, Canning shows how much is to be gained from the focus on political culture that also characterizes the four articles here.

We have also lost quite a lot, however, and we need to pay attention to that as well. As significant, insightful, and revelatory as the newer trends have been, there has also been a narrowing of vision by the deemphasis on political economy, all too often a suggestion that we can write the history of society and of people's lives devoid of investigating and reflecting upon the real—and yes, I shall use that term—material conditions in which they lived and often the great economic transformations, good and bad, that they experienced. Despite Canning's very positive assessment of the newer trends, even she recognizes that "if there is one deficit in the very expansive historiography on Weimar Germany, it is analysis of lived experience, both everyday practices and most notably the mentalities, consciousness, and emotions of actors and subjects in the drama of the Weimar Republic."[22]

The movement from class as the central analytical category to ethnicity, nation, and race has been less pronounced, perhaps, in the German field than in others, but it is present here as well. More than anything else, this shift has signified the loss of hopefulness that once characterized historians' work—whether that is good or bad is another matter. Class and revolution ran together and spawned a sense of possibility about the future; ethnicity, nationality, and race run with apartheid, fascism, ethnic cleansing, and genocide.

To cast a glance for a moment at a neighboring field, note, for example, how Soviet history has shifted. In the 1970s and 1980s, so much of the historical work was on the Bolshevik Revolution and the 1920s. The conferences, articles, and books of that period, grounded in social history and historical political economy, were always probing the possibilities the Bolshevik Revolution held for a more democratic, more humane socialism. Now virtually the entire field has moved to the Stalin period. Norman Naimark's book captures it best; *Stalin's Genocides* is the title. We do not even get "revolution from above,"

[22]Kathleen Canning, "The Politics of Symbols, Semantics, and Sentiments in the Weimar Republic," *Central European History* 43, no. 4 (2010): 572.

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let alone the restless questioning about whether Trotsky or Bukharin or the Kronstadt sailors or who-knows-what-else held out the promise of something better. We've gone from hopes for a brighter future to the grimmest of all possibilities, genocide. And not just one—note the plural of Naimark's title.[23] Or note Steve Kotkin and Jan Gross's *Uncivil Society: 1989 and the Implosion of the Communist Establishment* and their argument that with the possible exception of Poland, 1989–91 was not a popular revolution but a banking crisis.[24] From the barricades to the boardroom—that is about as far as one can get from the élan of revolution.

Closer at hand, one of the major themes of German historiography from the 1960s into the 1980s was the Revolution of 1918–19 and the possibilities of a third way between bedraggled and belittled Social Democracy and dictatorial, Soviet-style communism.[25] Depending on the author, the council movement, or the Independent Social Democratic Party or, more radically, the Communist Workers Party (all short-lived) would have given us a democratic, socialist Germany had it not been for the nefarious Social Democrats and their decision to ally with the forces of order. These studies were also grounded in social history and historical political economy. Whatever their shortcomings, they charted the possibility of a different path for German history, one in which there would have been no Weimar, at least not as it came to be, and certainly no Third Reich and Holocaust.

My point is not to hold up the scholarship of the 1960s-1980s as a model for today. But it is to argue that the shift toward culture and ethnicity, nation, and race has come at a cost that we need to address. Work in the cultural vein has much to teach us, and the four papers here accomplish that quite successfully. But to grasp Weimar's history in a broader fashion requires going beyond the cultural perspective. It means dealing with formal politics and economics, including the international system (much neglected of late), and the lived experiences of a variety of social groups. It means addressing also the even more neglected realm of religion. Only through analyses that take those factors into account can we begin to explain why republican culture ultimately failed to provide the democracy with a solid base of support. How, for example, can the fierce counterattack on Weimar's achievements be understood without systematic attention to the Protestant and Catholic churches and their followers? Or, to turn the issue around, how do we understand the experiences and commitments of those many religiously minded people who did support the republic? How do we understand the fact that for many Germans, Weimar, for all its difficulties and crises, was experienced

[23]Norman Naimark, *Stalin's Genocides* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010).

[24]Stephen Kotkin with a contribution by Jan T. Gross, *Uncivil Society: 1989 and the Implosion of the Communist Establishment* (New York: Modern Library, 2009).

[25]The starting point for what became an extensive scholarship is Peter von Oertzen, *Betriebsräte in der Novemberrevolution* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1963).

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as a moment of liberation from the stuffiness and stodginess and repressions of everything that came before? One would need to study the structural conditions of the educational system, professions, economy, military, and so on, work that has been done but seems not to figure in so many of the recent publications.

Studies of the symbolics and rhetoric of politics provide us with part of the answers and open up the history of Weimar Germany in all sorts of interesting ways, but also leave untouched many important areas of investigation. We need histories of Weimar Germany (and any other period or topic, for that matter) that take into account the approaches fruitfully represented here, but also go beyond them.

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