

and in the end explain. His book raises any number of issues that go beyond the immediate subject: two, which define much of Neidermayer's life, are attractions in both world wars of strategies to defeat a continental enemy by striking at his southeastern flank, an indirect approach that has always been difficult to implement; and the moral adjustments that a *Bildungsbürger* felt driven to make in the Third Reich.

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Diktaturen im Vergleich. By Detlef Schmiechen-Ackermann.
Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft. 2002. Pp. viii + 174.
EUR 16.50. ISBN 3-534-14730-8.

This book, part of the series *Kontroversen um die Geschichte* and accurately described in its title as a comparative study of dictatorships, is essentially a biographical essay on the central themes the author has chosen to discuss. It deals almost exclusively with Europe, with emphasis on the Soviet, German, and Italian experiences. China, Chile, and indeed all non-European dictatorships are mentioned only as asides.

An introductory section describes the rise of "modern" dictatorships (which the author regards as the "*signum*" of the twentieth century), and includes a survey of the techniques of dictatorial rule from ancient times to the present. A second section is a detailed discussion of the methodology of comparative history, its problems and limitations. In this connection he presents his rationale for his choice of themes. These include an "integral comparison" of twentieth-century dictatorships, of communism and Stalinism, Italian fascism, and Nazism. He goes on to compare the leadership qualities of Stalin, Hitler, and Mussolini, their political parties and government machinery. There follows a comparison of the social and economic background of these dictatorial regimes, the intellectual life and language of dictatorship, and the role of women in fascist Italy and Nazi Germany.

Of particular interest is the author's review of literature dealing with the criminal record of the dictatorships under discussion, a comparative analysis of their secret police and networks of informers, their use of terror and repression, and their mass slaughter of people under their rule. On this subject he clearly sides with scholars who reject the equation of Nazi and Communist crimes — Nazi genocide and the Communist mass murder of social/economic classes. However horrendous the crimes of communism were, there never was a Red Holocaust (p. 122). He also sides with critics of the theory, advanced by some scholars, that Italian fascism, unlike Nazism, was never racial nor anti-Semitic.

To counter this theory, he cites works dealing with fascist claims to racial superiority, its denigration of Slavs and Africans, as well as its outright anti-Semitism. He concludes that Mussolini and his henchmen were fully aware of the consequences of their anti-Semitic legislation and had laid the basis for a "Final Solution" in Italy (pp. 123–24). In his chapter on popular opposition and resistance, the author dismisses scholarly claims that there was a German popular resistance movement, and observes that the idea of a *Völk der Widerständler* would have been described more accurately as a *Widerstand ohne Völk* (p. 134).

In his final chapter the author restates at some length his reason for adopting a comparative approach to problems of dictatorship and concludes that aspirations to dictatorship will always be with us in one form or another. Because of this ever-present danger, he contends that the study of the past and the present mutations of democracy and dictatorship remains a task of superior political and historical importance (pp. 147–51).

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Die völkische Bewegung im wilhelminischen Kaiserreich: Sprache — Rasse — Religion. By Uwe Puschner. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft. 2001. Pp. 464. EUR 65.00. ISBN 3-534-15052-X.

Although many scholars working on the intellectual origins of National Socialism have shown a keen interest in *völkische* ideology, and several have gone to pains to trace its origins back to Imperial Germany, there has been little effort to study the array of *völkisch* movements that took shape during the Kaiserreich. These movements turned around a variety of agendas: religious rebirth, economic growth, racial and linguistic purity, anti-Semitism, anti-Slavism, eugenics, internal colonialism, and even diet and health. Many and varied, these movements lacked both an overarching organization and consistent ideology, but they persisted in sundry forms into the Weimar Republic and, according to Uwe Puschner, they prepared much of the ground for radical right-wing nationalism and National Socialism.

Well-documented, nicely illustrated, and exhaustively researched, Puschner offers his readers an overwhelming amount of detail about the seemingly countless associations in the Kaiserreich that championed an idea of the German *Völk*. He contends that, taken together, these associations constituted an important *völkische Bewegung*, one that has been overlooked by scholars such as George Mosse, who privileged the role of "thinkers" while trying to understand the ways in which older notions of the German *Völk* helped to shape National