

Once the floodwaters began to recede after 29 January 1910, the French came to commemorate the flood as a time of national unity in the face of adversity. There was no backlash against Republican parties in the elections of April and May 1910. The regime had proved itself. Jackson concludes that the experience of the flood would serve Parisians well in the war of 1914–18, teaching them how to overcome hardship and strengthening their resolve in the face of the enemy, now a human rather than a natural threat. This is an interesting idea but more evidence would have strengthened the argument that in the summer days of August 1914, Parisians and the nation did indeed draw on the ‘spirit of the flood’.

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Werner Bramke and Silvio Reisinger, *Leipzig in der Revolution von 1918/1919*. Leipzig: Leipzig Universitätsverlag, 2009. 152pp. 11 illustrations. 3 tables. £20.00/ €24.00.
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Although the industrial powerhouse of Leipzig had long been a centre for radical political theorists, its socialists had traditionally preferred pragmatic action to ideological warfare. All this was to change in the German Revolution of 1918–19, during which a Workers’ and Soldiers’ Council took control of the city and launched a series of mass strikes. It took several thousand Freikorps to retake the city several months later. Although the situation in Leipzig was not unique, it was distinct. Leipzig’s Independent Socialist Party was unusually strong, and the Workers’ Council maintained a lengthy hold over the city’s administration. It is these peculiarities that are the primary concern of Werner Bramke and Silvio Reisinger’s book. They argue that a detailed study of Leipzig demonstrates the need to revise our views on the revolutionary period in its wider national context. For example, while the deposition of the Munich Soviet Republic by the Freikorps on 2 May 1919 is often considered the end of Germany’s revolutionary potential, taking instead the ‘freeing’ of Leipzig from 11 to 25 May significantly alters our perception of the Revolution’s course.

Bramke and Reisinger also aim to reassess the Revolution’s historiographical treatment, freeing it from what they see as its links to Cold War ideology. They argue that East German literature overstated the role of the Communists, while downplaying the more sizeable socialist parties and refusing to differentiate between other non-socialist activists. If Westerners noted it at all, they interpreted radical leftist agitation overly negatively, a view that is in danger of persisting after 1989. Not only has this resulted in a lack of critically engaged studies of the many courses of Germany’s Revolution, but in the post-1989 period, the events of 1918–19 have also been subsumed by this newer, peaceful and seemingly successful Revolution.

The book begins by introducing Leipzig, contrasting its ‘two faces’ – the significant industrial centre with a growing proletariat against the city of music, publishing and culture. The already uneasy relationships between these different constituents, and the parties and papers which represented them, worsened during the unpopular World War I. Pragmatic difficulties, including a surprisingly high level of unemployment, led to a radicalization of the city’s organized workers – a

worrying situation of which the Saxon leadership was well aware. Against this backdrop emerged the Revolution itself. Bramke and Reisinger focus in detail on its beginnings in November 1918, before chronicling its radicalization and culmination in a general strike in March 1919, as well as the eventual occupation of the city. The authors are compelling when arguing that Leipzig's particular conditions are crucial for understanding its experience of the Revolution (although calling it a *Sonderweg* is a heavy-handed, and unnecessary, analogy). Particularly successful is their nuanced discussion of the political parties involved. So, while many middle-class citizens opposed the Workers' Councils, they also bitterly resented the city's occupation. Both actions impinged upon the city's autonomy, and tarnished Leipzig's economic and cultural status. Conversely, the successes of the socialists were limited, even during the height of the Revolution. This was due to a combination of the moderate nature of the majority socialists, tensions between workers and soldiers and the fractious nature of the left-wing parties. All this reveals much about Leipzig, but also valuable information about Germany's diverse political makeup. The inclusion of photographs enhances the discussion, although a greater focus on the society pictured within them would add to the text. A city map would also be invaluable.

It is this assumption of prior knowledge that is the book's major weakness. Although it contains an interesting contextual chapter, the book still requires a specialist knowledge of Germany's early twentieth-century political history, and a basic knowledge of Leipzig is also helpful. Political actors are not introduced; the many political parties are only referred to by acronyms. This makes the book's interesting conclusions rather inaccessible. Referencing similar studies for other German cities would not only strengthen the authors' contention that Leipzig was unusual, it would also make a wider readership possible. Finally, given the book aims to re-orientate scholarship, it surprisingly lacks an involved historiographical discussion (as well as a bibliography). If the authors are serious in their claim that Germany's political tensions restrict academic inquiry into the Revolution, then they should help correct this problem by referencing the very good scholarship from outside Germany. Most important is Sean Dobson's *Authority and Upheaval in Leipzig, 1910–1920. The Story of a Relationship* (Yale, 2001). David McKibben's illuminating article on the German Independent Socialists (*Central European History*, 25 (1992), 425–43) reaches similar conclusions and deserves recognition. Since Bramke and Reisinger advocate a more diverse approach to this period, it is a shame their use of scholarship is not itself more cosmopolitan.

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M. Jeffrey Hardwick, *Mall Maker: Victor Gruen, Architect of an American Dream*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004. 288pp. 47 plates. £16.50/\$24.95.
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Victor Gruen, like many successful idealists, might have been happier as a failure. Gruen cherished great European public spaces and genuinely believed that he could build functioning, satisfying public squares in the heart of American