

## **Conflict, Catastrophe and Continuity**





# Conflict, Catastrophe and Continuity

*Essays on Modern German History*



*Edited by*

Frank Biess

Mark Roseman

Hanna Schissler



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# Contents



Preface vii

Introduction 1

Frank Biess and Mark Roseman

## Part 1 ~ German Elites and an Unruly Society

- 1 *Kulturkampf* and *Geschlechterkampf*: Anti-Catholicism,  
Catholic Women, and Public Space 27  
Michael B. Gross
- 2 The 1923 Ruhr Crisis: The Limits of Active Resistance 44  
Conan Fischer
- 3 Political Violence, *Gesinnung*, and the Courts in  
Late Weimar Berlin 60  
Pamela E. Swett

## Part 2 ~ German Society and a Violent Regime

- 4 Beyond Conviction? Perpetrators, Ideas and Action in the Holocaust  
in Historiographical Perspective 83  
Mark Roseman
- 5 The Dissolution of the Third Reich 104  
Hans Mommsen
- 6 The Search for Missing Soldiers: MIAs, POWs, and  
Ordinary Germans, 1943–45 117  
Frank Biess

## Part 3 ~ Change and Continuity in Germany's Foreign Relations

- 7 The Kaiser and His English Relations Revisited 137  
John C. G. Röhl

8	Appeasement and Counter-Appeasement: Nazi–Soviet Collaboration 1939–1941	157
	Hartmut Pogge von Strandmann	
9	Imperialism as a Paradigm for Modern German History	177
	Uta Poiger	
10	Americanization as a Paradigm of German History	200
	Mary Nolan	

**Part 4 ~ Smooth Surfaces, Murky Depths:  
The Social and Cultural History of the Federal Republic**

11	The Radicalization that Never Was? Refugees in the German Federal Republic	221
	Ian Connor	
12	Germany's Special Path? Economic Sciences and Politics in the Federal Republic, 1945–1970	237
	Alexander Nützenadel	
13	Catholic Elites, Gender, and Unintended Consequences in the 1950s: Toward a Reinterpretation of the Role of Conservatives in the Federal Republic	252
	Mark Edward Ruff	
14	Memory, Morality, and the Sexual Liberalization of West Germany	273
	Dagmar Herzog	
15	The Modern Guild: Rotary Clubs and Bourgeois Renewal in the Aftermath of National Socialism	297
	S. Jonathan Wiesen	
16	Fighting to Win the Peace: 08/15 and West German Memories of the Second World War	318
	Robert G. Moeller	
17	Rehabilitating Fatherland: Race and German Remasculinization	340
	Heide Fehrenbach	
18	Epilogue: <i>Zeitgenossenschaft</i> : Some Reflections on Doing Contemporary German History	360
	Hanna Schissler	
	Selected Readings	379
	Contributors	388



## Preface



The roots of this volume lie in a 2003 conference celebrating the 65th birthday of Professor Volker Berghahn. Bringing together historians from Britain, Canada, Germany, and the United States (many of whom are represented in the present collection), the conference was a fitting occasion to pay tribute to a scholar who has done so much to bridge the academic communities on both sides of the Atlantic. Good scholarship depends, after all, on the productive exchange of research, including the cross-national fertilization of ideas. Such an exchange requires, in turn, scholars who can function as “translators” between the different scholarly communities and national environments. Over the last thirty years, no one in the field of German history has played this role with greater breadth, intellectual generosity, modesty, and humanity than Volker Berghahn.

Born in Berlin on February 15, 1938, the son of a high-level Siemens manager and the eldest of three brothers, Volker Berghahn was schooled in Essen, Braunschweig, and Hamburg and began his university education at Göttingen studying law. After taking courses in politics and history at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Volker definitively opted for history, joining the émigré historian Professor Francis Carsten at the University of London, where he wrote his doctoral thesis on the post–World War I veterans’ organization, the *Stahlhelm*. Obtaining his Ph.D. in 1964, Volker took a post-doctorate at St. Antony’s College, Oxford, turning the thesis into a highly regarded first book.<sup>1</sup> A stint as *Assistant* with Professor Erich Matthias in Mannheim followed, during which time, and funded by a DFG fellowship, Volker Berghahn wrote his groundbreaking *Habilitation* on Tirpitz, which appeared in 1971.<sup>2</sup>

Having married Marion Koop in 1969, Volker turned his back on what he saw as an over-hierarchical German academic system and took a lectureship at the University of East Anglia in 1970, followed by a chair at the University of Warwick in 1975. Here, as well as maintaining a very active publication record and becoming a father of three, Volker did much to invigorate the field of German history in the U.K., with a highly successful stint as chairman of the German History Society alongside his responsibilities as departmental chair. He also helped advise his wife Marion as she masterminded an explosion of good English-language German studies, first at Berg Publishers and

later at Berghahn Books. But in the 1980s even the most effective advocate for German history could not avoid becoming frustrated at the increasingly ramshackle education system of the Thatcher years. In 1988, Volker moved to Brown University, where he was at last able to foster a lively community of graduate students. His preeminence in the field of modern German history was recognized by his appointment in 1998 to replace Fritz Stern (1967–1992) and István Deák (1993–1997) as Seth Low Professor at Columbia University.

It is not possible in a short preface to do justice to Volker Berghahn's contribution to modern German history, a contribution that includes major interventions in at least four different debates, and over twenty books along with innumerable articles and conference papers. After examining the nature and impact of paramilitary politics in the Weimar period in his Ph.D., Volker established himself as one of the clearest, and most social-historically grounded exponents of the idea that the First World War, and Germany's involvement in it, was above all the expression of a deep-seated crisis or set of crises in German society.<sup>3</sup> His study of Tirpitz remained the "most authoritative book on German navalism for three decades."<sup>4</sup> More broadly, at the same time, he opened up the social history of politics—and indeed the social history of militarism—in a way which has cast lasting influence on many of his contemporaries and students.<sup>5</sup>

Building on this work, Volker's early 1980s textbook, *Modern Germany*,<sup>6</sup> showed the enormous strength of his socially and economically informed emphasis on the role of elites. This sophisticated awareness of interlocking networks of power-holders, connecting politics, economy, and society, has continued to be the hallmark of his approach to modern German history, informing a series of outstanding textbooks and survey texts.<sup>7</sup> It has also been reflected in a number of highly regarded and innovative works on German business history, tracing the evolution of both changing management and labor relations styles, and also of international marketing and investment strategies.<sup>8</sup>

Volker's emphasis on the relationships between economic elites and politics has been deployed to greatest effect, perhaps, in his contribution to understanding the process by which American elites sought to influence and reconnect with their German—and European counterparts—after 1945. This gave a much-needed economic dimension to our understanding of the "pax Americana," bringing such dry issues as de-cartelization and de-concentration to the center of debates about U.S. policy.<sup>9</sup> It also offered an interesting generation-based sociology of German industrialists, making clear how uneven and complex was the interaction between U.S. and German businessmen.<sup>10</sup> Above all, it furnished the concept of Americanization with new depth and impetus in the postwar historiography, so that it now competes happily with westernization and modernization as a broad model of social, economic, and cultural change.<sup>11</sup> More recently, Volker has given studies of cultural Ameri-



canization a much-needed elite and institutional *Unterbau* with his complex and stylish account of Shepard Stone.<sup>12</sup>

Despite this truly formidable record of scholarship and publication, Volker's impact on the historical profession has derived as much from the quality of the human relationships he has formed with colleagues, students, institutions and donors. His kindness, conscientiousness, and openness are legendary, and his ability to combine his own active research career with enormous commitment to supporting research students, forging institutional links, assisting younger colleagues—let alone maintaining a full and rich family life—has been absolutely daunting. The volume brings together representatives of each of the three generations of scholars who have benefited from Volker Berghahn's intellectual contribution, friendship, and support.

With a chronological range extending from the 1860s to the 1960s, the present volume has attempted to match the temporal terrain of Volker's own research. In posing questions about society, elites, and domestic conflict, about the logics and continuities in German foreign policy, and about the transformation of postwar Germany, the book seeks to address the central themes of Volker's impressive oeuvre. Most of the essayists belong to the younger or middle generation of active scholars, and are either his former doctoral students or historians influenced by his work at important moments in their careers. As a mentor, Volker Berghahn has always sought to facilitate diversity and innovation more than he has tried to lay down a particular orthodoxy, and, reflecting this, the approaches and questions in the present volume vary considerably. Many of Volker's pupils have responded to recent currents in scholarship on areas of gender and sexuality, genocidal violence, memory, discourse, and representation in ways that differ from the approach of their mentor. The collection's diversity is further enhanced by the presence in the volume of a number of senior scholars who have been in spirited and mutually enriching debate with Volker over many years. In that sense, this volume serves as a showcase of key contemporary debates in modern German historiography and, at the same time, as a testament to the continuing openness, generosity, and wide-ranging character of Volker Berghahn's interactions in the field of modern German history.

The editors would like to express their gratitude to the German Academic Exchange Service, New York Office; the Alfred Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach-Stiftung; the History Department of Columbia University; Deutsches Haus at Columbia University; and John P. Birkelund for making the 2003 conference possible, and also to Berghahn Books for assistance in transforming the conference idea into a volume.

*Frank Biess, San Diego*

*Mark Roseman, Bloomington*

*Hanna Schissler, Berlin*

## Notes

1. *Der Stahlhelm. Bund der Frontsoldaten 1918–1935* (Düsseldorf, 1966).
2. *Der Tirpitz-Plan. Genesis und Verfall einer innenpolitischen Krisenstrategie* (Düsseldorf, 1971).
3. In addition to the Tirpitz volume, cited above, see *Rüstung und Machtpolitik; zur Anatomie des “Kalten Krieges” vor 1914* (Düsseldorf, 1973); *Germany and the Approach of War in 1914* (London, 1973); and, with Wilhelm Deist, *Rüstung im Zeichen der wilhelminischen Weltpolitik: grundlegende Dokumente 1890–1914* (Düsseldorf, 1988).
4. Dirk Bönker, review of Rolf Hobson, *Maritimer Imperialismus*, <http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/rezensionen/id=4594>.
5. *Militarismus: Francis Carsten* z. 65. Geburtstag (Kiepenheuer und Witsch, 1975); *Germany in the Age of Total War*, with Martin Kitchen, (London, 1981); *Militarism: the History of an International Debate, 1861–1979* (Leamington Spa, 1981).
6. *Modern Germany* (Cambridge, 1982).
7. *Imperial Germany 1871–1914: Economy, Society, Culture, and Politics* (New York and Oxford, 1994); *Sarajewo, 28. Juni 1914: der Untergang des alten Europa* (Munich, 1997); *Europa im Zeitalter der Weltkriege* (Frankfurt, 2002).
8. *Industrial Relations in West Germany* (Leamington Spa, 1987); *European Strategies of German Big Business: The Quest for Economic Empire* (Oxford, 1996). And see below.
9. *The Americanization of West German Industry, 1945–1973* (Oxford, 1986).
10. See *Unternehmer und Politik in der Bundesrepublik* (Frankfurt, 1985), and also *Otto A. Friedrich, ein politischer Unternehmer: sein Leben und seine Zeit, 1902–1975* with Paul J. Friedrich (Frankfurt, 1993).
11. For a brief review of the literature and a sense of Volker Berghahn’s significance in the field, see Mary Nolan’s contribution in this volume.
12. *America and the Intellectual Cold Wars in Europe: Shepard Stone Between Philanthropy, Academy and Diplomacy* (Princeton, 2001).



# Introduction

Frank Biess and Mark Roseman



The German “rupture of civilization,” as National Socialism and the Holocaust have been dubbed, continues to generate enormous fascination and controversy.<sup>1</sup> The present collection offers new perspectives on Germany’s journey into and out of the abyss. Several essays are concerned with the sources of violence and conflict in German society before and during the Nazi era. In particular, they analyze the interaction between the state, elites, and the wider population in generating the often violent and volatile course of German history between national unification and the collapse of Nazism. For the pre-1933 period, these essays emphasize broadly based societal involvement in conflict or resistance to which the state was forced to respond. For the Nazi period, it was above all the regime itself that was responsible for violence, and the contributors here explore society’s complex involvements in and responses to that violence. Another set of contributions considers the societal anchoring of foreign policy, and examines whether the abrupt regime changes in 1918, 1933, and 1945 produced similarly abrupt discontinuities in Germany’s relationships with the wider world. In recent years the search for National Socialism’s roots and rationale has been joined by a new interest in the Third Reich’s postwar impact, legacy, and memory.<sup>2</sup> A final cluster of papers thus examines the way post-1945 Germany society emerged from the shadow of fascism and genocide, total war and total defeat.

Taken together, the volume’s contributions show the continuing centrality of Nazism and the Holocaust as structuring questions for understanding modern German history. But they also remind us that recent work has left behind both older teleological readings of what Friedrich Meinecke termed the “German catastrophe”<sup>3</sup> and the more simplistic redemptive narratives of (West) Germany’s post-1945 development. Indeed, some of the contributions here are explicitly concerned with the broader project of identifying multiple con-

tinuities and ruptures across the thresholds of 1933 and 1945, and thus of seeking to understand a German twentieth century that included both unparalleled violence and destruction and also unprecedented stability and prosperity.<sup>4</sup> In a concluding historiographical paper, Hanna Schissler examines the way *Zeitgeschichte* has evolved in recent decades and ponders what new questions might be posed in the future as Nazism and the Holocaust begin to lose some of their claim on the historical imagination.

## German Elites and an Unruly Society

The relationship between elites and mass society has been at the heart of some of the central controversies about Germany's fateful development in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Since the *Sonderweg* debates of the 1960s, Germany's elites have been held responsible for steering the nation into disaster, and for responding repressively to the democratic impulses of a modernizing society.<sup>5</sup> From his earliest writings, Volker Berghahn has shown a keen moral sense of the shortcomings of Germany's ruling classes and perhaps more than any other historian of his generation has illuminated the thinking and behavior of Germany's political, economic, and military leaders from the Kaiserreich through to the post-1945 period.<sup>6</sup> The essays in this volume show failures of leadership in many respects. But they also remind us that Germany's elites were not making history under conditions of their own choosing; nor were they simply manipulating a passive and quiescent society. Instead, nineteenth century liberal politicians embroiled in the *Kulturkampf*, or the statesmen, civil servants, and businessmen responding to the Ruhr crisis, or Weimar's judges trying the latest episode of political street violence, found themselves confronting an "unruly" society to which they responded sometimes with fear, sometimes with acquiescence, sometimes with sympathy.

Michael Gross's chapter proceeds from the assumption that the *Kulturkampf*, the fledgling German empire's attack on the Catholic church, was not a peripheral episode but an event of central importance for understanding the history of German liberalism and indeed that of nineteenth-century Germany more generally. He joins scholars such as David Blackbourn, Jonathan Sperber, and Helmut Walser Smith who have revived our sensitivity to the significance of Germany's distinctive confessional divide as a central complicating element of its political framework to 1945 and beyond.<sup>7</sup> More particularly, Gross is part of a small group of historians, represented also by Dagmar Herzog and Mark Ruff in this volume, who have shown that religious and confessional conflicts were often played out on the terrain of gender and sexuality. Gross argues that the *Kulturkampf* should be understood as a *Geschlechterkampf*, a battle between the sexes. When liberals worried about the Catholic

threat, they saw a movement in which women played a major role, challenging received ideas about women's proper sphere. Beyond these concerns about a "feminized" Catholic church, liberals gendered the struggle against the church also on a more symbolic level. They believed women's alleged deficiencies—the weak purchase of rationality, the penchant for emotional display and superstition, and the insidious arts of manipulation—mirrored those of the Catholic church. By contrast, liberalism and the new German state were understood as virile male entities, trumpeting the call of reason against the alleged emotionality and superstition of the Catholic mission.

By introducing gender into his analysis, Michael Gross not only opens up an innovative new perspective on the *Kulturkampf* but also introduces the theme of a fractious society unsettling and challenging Germany's elites. Here is a German society that is not the quiescent subject of elite manipulation. Yet this is not a return to the false heroics of some older social history—writing "from below"; Gross's Catholic women are not the heroic agents of emancipatory politics. This is a story of female activism and of emancipation from certain conventional roles and constraints, yet under distinctly conservative auspices. Gross's work represents a new kind of social history of politics, in which symbolic and emotional goods play their full part in shaping perceptions and behavior.

Like Michael Gross, Conan Fischer offers some striking new findings on an episode we thought we knew well. The *Ruhrkampf* of 1923, Germany's campaign of passive resistance (and some active sabotage) has often been portrayed as part of the politics of illusion: it merely deferred tasting the bitter medicine of defeat while centrally contributing to the disastrous hyperinflation of 1923.<sup>8</sup> Yet Conan Fischer focuses on another, less well known aspect of this conflict. He shows organized labor's part not only in bearing the cost of passive resistance, but also in providing the momentum. It was not primarily the right-wing radicals, whose violent actions were often decried by the Ruhr population, but rather the republican majority that ensured both government and industry alike would stand up to the French. Fischer, like Gross, thus offers us an image of an "unruly" populace, here not in the sense of the feminized Catholics that so incensed nineteenth-century liberals but as a broad-based movement of feeling that put governments and other elites under pressure. This popular pressure Fischer sees not as illusory revanchism but, like the earlier trade-union campaign against the Kapp Putsch in 1920, as a fight motivated by the desire to defend the Republic. Fischer thus gives the *Ruhrkampf* a rather more democratic, more republican, and more benign face than many conventional interpretations. He leaves no doubt, however, as to its ruinous consequences for the working people of the region and elsewhere. His essay also points to the central significance of memory and mythmaking in the destruction of Germany's first democracy: while the democratic aspect of the

struggle on the Ruhr has largely been forgotten, its insignificant activist and terrorist aspect became a central myth of the political Right and was eventually used to destroy the Republic.

Pamela Swett too offers a surprising take on a well-worn trope of Weimar history, and she too tells a complex story of interplay between an unruly *Volk* and the state. One of the commonplaces of the standard account of Weimar's downfall is that the Republic was betrayed by the anti-democratic, right-wing bias of its judiciary, witnessed in grotesque high-profile cases such as the very lenient sentence for treason handed down to Hitler in 1924.<sup>9</sup> By contrast, Swett offers a striking reappraisal of the legal system's handling of political violence. It was, she shows, neither so biased to the right nor so unsympathetic to the left as has often been assumed. Indeed, court verdicts related to political violence were dangerous less for being partisan than for endorsing a culture of violence that would prove disastrous after 1933.

Swett's essay challenges a Foucauldian reading of the Weimar welfare state that has emphasized its disciplinary, rationalizing, and exclusionary elements and thus the continuities between Weimar and the Third Reich.<sup>10</sup> Swett demonstrates that by employing social workers' reports about the young defendants involved in street brawls, Weimar courts often took into consideration as mitigating circumstances the protagonists' difficult living conditions. Judges followed a trend in German jurisprudence that had emerged in the *Kaiserreich* of looking at the defendant's *Gesinnung*—a term conveying character, outlook, and motive—as much as the deed itself. In Swett's reading of the encounter between unruly street fighters and Weimar professionals, welfare workers and the judiciary acted with considerable sensitivity and discretion. At the same time, Swett's essay also points to a different kind of continuity across the threshold of 1933, namely, legitimating and accepting violence. Violence had an accepted role in the moral economy not only of those who came before the bench but also of the judges who were trying their cases. If violence appeared to be motivated by an honorable *Gesinnung*, judges were prepared to treat it leniently. This kind of "ethical" approach to evaluating the use of force facilitated the introduction of Nazi standards of jurisprudence after 1933, when *Gesinnung* became all that mattered. As Swett shows, Germany's elites, or at least its judges, were in effect accepting the norms of the unruly society. During the Weimar years, "honorable violence" became part of established legal discourse with fateful consequences for the rule of law after 1933.

## German Society and an "Unruly" State

The kind of migration and dissemination of violent norms described by Swett recurs in Mark Roseman's analysis of the forces and beliefs shaping participa-

tion in the Holocaust. But whereas Swett looks at a jurisprudence that absorbs the violent assumptions of the street, Roseman looks at how after 1933, it was the state that, as it were, became unruly. Society then faced the choice of mobilizing its energies along lines tolerated by the regime, accepting quiescence, or risking the most brutal repression. As recent research has become increasingly aware, the regime did indeed manage to motivate hundreds of thousands of individuals to become active perpetrators of racial war and genocide. How do we explain this participation? In different ways, the chapters by Roseman, Mommsen, and Biess all demonstrate how complex were the mechanisms and trajectories that tied regime and society together and that, toward the end of the war, also began to draw them apart.

Echoing the recent work of Nicolas Berg and others, Roseman's historiographically based analysis of Holocaust perpetrators begins by tracing the slow process by which historians after 1945 came to embrace the idea of the ideologically motivated perpetrator.<sup>11</sup> Roseman explores the distancing strategies that led the post-Holocaust world to suppress evidence that a large cohort of participants had been believers in the cause of racial war. In Germany and in much of the West, the perpetrators were initially seen as a small group of madmen or psychologically damaged individuals. Later, as emphasis shifted from a small coterie of sworn Nazis to a larger army of bureaucrats, the monster was replaced by the neutral functionary and the "banality of evil." Both paradigms downplayed the idea of intelligent men openly embracing the cause.

By the 1990s, however, an explosion of research was taking place on the "perpetrators," and a new influential (though never uncontested) model of the perpetrator as ideological warrior (*Weltanschauungskrieger*) was emerging. The shift responded in part to the changing moral climate of memory in the Federal Republic, where a postwar generation of historians no longer felt under the same pressure to deny their parents' and grandparents' active involvement in the regime. The participants' embrace of violence and commitment to the cause now seemed at least as important as their obedience or bureaucratic efficiency.

While recognizing the progress in throwing off old taboos, Roseman is critical of the model of the *Weltanschauungskrieger*. A growing body of recent empirical research has shown, in fact, how complicated and nonlinear was the relationship between the perpetrators' convictions and their actions. Though many key players brought with them values and ideals that helped spur their involvement in a racial war of extermination, most had to travel very far from their earlier selves in order to participate in genocide. To understand these journeys we not only have to recognize the degree of displacement but also have to see that "ideas" as such (for example, strongly held anti-Semitism) may not be the relevant starting point. Recent work has indicated that we often need to think in terms of past experiences of violence as much as a clearly anti-Semitic

intellectual pedigree. Moreover, we need to explain not only the unabated participation in racial killing to the last minute but also the abrupt ending of violence with the war's end—a fact that suggests the limits to the recent model of an “unconditional generation” driven by its own ethos.<sup>12</sup> In fact, Roseman argues that earlier interpretations of the perpetrator from Hannah Arendt and Hans Mommsen were by no means “apologetic” but rather were acutely conscious of the problem for understanding motivation posed by the easy adaptation of Nazi perpetrators to the postwar world.<sup>13</sup>

Both Hans Mommsen and Frank Biess take as their starting point that closing phase of the war that marks a pivotal moment in Mark Roseman's argument about Nazi perpetrators as well. Until very recently, the last stages of the Nazi dictatorship did not feature prominently in the historiography of the Third Reich. The violence, disintegration, and improvisation of the 1944–45 period seemed of little interest compared with the grand designs of the earlier years. The endgame's primary significance, for a long time, was reduced to providing evidence in support of functionalist explanations from Hans Mommsen and others of the increasing breakdown of orderly structures of governance. Recently, however, interest has grown in the last year or two of fighting as a discrete phase of the war.<sup>14</sup> The primary reason for this has been historians' move away from questions about Nazi grand strategy to a growing focus on the regime's success at mobilizing the energy and violence of the population. Why, despite increasingly clear evidence that defeat was unavoidable, and despite dramatically increasing German losses, did fighting continue unabated, and violence against domestic opponents and racial enemies escalate?

Building on more than forty years of research, Hans Mommsen, the most eminent German historian of the Nazi period, offers a powerful and insightful account of this phase by linking his earlier work on growing administrative chaos to the new interest in the relentlessness of the fighting. How is it, he asks, that despite the accelerating dissolution of any unity in government, the regime was able to fight effectively even when four-fifths of Reich territory had fallen to the Allies? Unlike much recent work, Mommsen finds the answers less in the popular mentality of ordinary Germans than in the structures of power Hitler had created, and in particular in the constellation of competing interests and views among the leading figures in the Nazi Party who enjoyed Hitler's confidence. Mommsen traces the course of what he dubs the “participation” of the state under the leadership of Goebbels and especially of Bormann. Through its role in welfare and resettlement work, the party insinuated itself into everyday life in a way that made it almost impossible for any organized opposition to emerge. Despite—and in some strange way, because of—the knowledge of impending defeat, the party leadership threw itself into ever greater zealotry, invoking heroic myths from the pre-1933 “time of struggle” to persuade itself that only will was needed to survive. Increasingly, as



Mommsen shows, the propaganda and thinking of party leaders blurred the distinction between achieving victory in the current war and creating the ideological foundations for future revival.

Yet that revival did not take place, even though the recent experience of the U.S. occupation of Iraq has reminded us how even a militarily superior power may have great difficulty controlling an occupied territory if oppositional energies and impulses remain within the subject population. In 1945, however, the disappearance of active support for the Nazi regime, and the cessation of violent acts by its former servants, was almost complete.

The question posed by this rapid turnabout provides the starting point for Frank Biess's analysis, which seeks to understand the closing phase of the war not only as the explosion of violence but also a period in which the population began to disengage from the regime and mentally to prepare for the postwar period. This disengagement was in many respects a passive one, and thus not so much the story of an unruly society as of a society beginning to disengage from a horrifically "unruly" state. Biess shows that even in previously loyal circles, concern for family members lost in action or held in Soviet captivity created networks of communication that subverted official information management. Among groups who had family members in Soviet captivity, Nazi morale surveys noted growing hopes for a rapid end to the war so that families could be reunited with their missing loved ones. While some demanded revenge attacks on Jews and Russians for their losses, others went so far as to call for a change of official conduct of war to avoid military disasters and to ensure German actions did not engender reprisal killing of captured German soldiers. Nevertheless, Biess's analysis complements Mommsen's emphasis on party-state control by emphasizing the ability of the Nazi state's security organs—often with considerable help from denunciations—to intercept informal communications. Private longings for an end to the war thus rarely assumed public force.

As Biess makes clear, the issue of the missing soldiers was caught between two conflicting priorities for the Nazi regime. On the one hand, it concerned a matter of the gravest political significance, namely, the struggle with the archenemy in the East. It undermined some of the regime's most politically sensitive claims, above all that the enemy was completely inhuman in its treatment of German troops, and that the German army continued to show a spirit of unalloyed heroism and sacrifice in its unwillingness to surrender. Communication about the prisoners of war was thus intensely political. At the same time, it also involved a sphere the Nazis had propagandistically celebrated as sacrosanct, feminine, and private (even if that privacy had been disrupted in many ways in practice), namely, family and the home. It was in the private realm of the family that the loss of soldier husbands and sons could begin to be read in ways that involved a distancing from the regime. It was also the

emerging self-definition of wives and mothers of themselves as apolitical victims of war that, as Biess argues, represented the body of experience and self-identification that could most easily be carried over into the postwar period. In this way, the communication and reflection on the MIAs began a process of reflection and discourse that would lay the foundation for Germany's postwar memories of war and defeat.

## Change and Continuity in German Foreign Policy

It was Fritz Fischer's discovery of the remarkable parallels between the war plans of 1914 and Hitler's territorial aims that helped to launch the cluster of interpretations that became known as the German *Sonderweg*.<sup>15</sup> As well as identifying continuities in foreign policy from the *Kaiserreich* to the Third Reich, the *Sonderweg* model attributed those continuities to enduring structural problems within German society. According to the model's adherents, German elites failed to create the requisite liberal and democratic superstructure necessary to respond to the challenges of industrial society. Instead, those elites papered over social and political problems at home by resorting to social imperialism and aggressive nationalism. Volker Berghahn produced one of the clearest and most incisive analyses of the way the *Kaiserreich's* domestic crises helped to shape foreign decision making.<sup>16</sup> While some of the assumptions of the early *Sonderweg* model have been called into question, the basic questions about continuity and discontinuity across the changes of regime, and about the degree to which domestic issues and problems helped to provoke or shape Germany's foreign policy remain crucial.

John Röhl is one of the contributors to this volume who has been in critical and constructive dialog with Volker Berghahn for some forty years. In the 1970s, when the Bielefeld school's emphasis on underlying societal structures dominated the historiography, Röhl's biographical approach, foregrounding Wilhelm II's personal quirks and influence, appeared out of step. Since the 1980s, however, Röhl's own oeuvre and a series of other notable studies both on Wilhelm II (some of them from Röhl's former pupils) and on the role of the court and royal symbolism in international relations have made it clear how important were both monarch and court for shaping the *Kaiserreich's* fate.<sup>17</sup>

In the present piece, Röhl returns to the Kaiser's problematic relationship with England, offering striking evidence of a classic love-hate syndrome that emerged early on in childhood. Wilhelm was the victim of a strange upbringing, in which the future German emperor was continually informed by his "English" mother of the British empire's superiority. Desperate for personal recognition from the British royal family, and seemingly naively unaware of the reasons of state that perforce conditioned their responses to his overtures,

the adult Wilhelm grew more and more threatening in his demands for appreciation and honor in ways that merely intensified distrust and alienation. The man whom Count Bismarck once mocked as the “complete anglomaniac” would later in life be second to none in his fulmination against the circles of “Juda” running British affairs.

Of course, Röhl acknowledges the many factors influencing the Anglo-German relationship that lay beyond royal purview. But Wilhelm’s overwhelming wish to impress or best Great Britain undoubtedly had huge consequences for German foreign policy. At the very least he limited his governments’ scope for maneuver. At most, he may have prevented Germany from pursuing a more emollient policy that would have secured its continental and commercial interests in ways that did not threaten Britain to the point of war. And beyond shedding light on Wilhelm’s particular personality, Röhl’s chapter illuminates some of the strange contradictions that resulted from the transnational dynastic ties that continued to criss-cross the frontiers of modern rival nation states.

If Röhl’s biographical take on Germany’s foreign policy stands in productive tension with Berghahn’s approach, Hartmut Pogge von Strandmann’s intriguing analysis of the Nazi-Soviet Pact is much closer to Berghahn’s interest in the economic factors shaping international relations. Historians have tended to analyze the 1939 Nazi-Soviet Pact primarily with reference to the two powers’ geopolitical and military strategic interests.<sup>18</sup> The trade and commerce resultant from the accord is treated as a mere sideshow or at most of symbolic significance. Pogge von Strandmann shows by contrast that trade both helped create the impetus for the German-Soviet rapprochement and offered both sides important incentives for its continuance. The German and Russian economies, as he reminds us, had long proved complementary. German capital goods exports were as welcome in Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union as Russian raw materials were important for the German economy. Partly because of this, as Pogge argues, trade had always also served political and diplomatic purposes, rescuing both Germany and Russia from isolation in the 1920s, and providing a bridge between the Cold War blocs in the 1950s and 1960s.

While Soviet-German trade took a sharp downturn in the first half of the 1930s, the memory of mutually conducive economic relations remained strong among leading actors in both countries in the late 1930s. Industry’s hope of gaining access to Russian raw materials provided the chief incentive on the German side, while leading Politburo members drew up wish-lists of German goods. In 1939 a major trade deal preceded the two countries’ nonaggression pact and helped to create a climate of trust (albeit ill-founded trust) prior to the political agreements. Negotiations over the precise terms of trade were tough, as Pogge demonstrates, and fulfillment fluctuated according to the degree to which foreign engagements and military circumstances left Germany or Russia feeling dependent on each other. Nevertheless, the volume of goods

not just promised but actually delivered was striking, proving the deals to have been far more than the symbolic dowry of a marriage of convenience. To be sure, it is not entirely clear how far actors on both sides were aware that they were—like the international capitalists both regimes loved to decry—equipping each other to fight each other. From autumn 1940 at the latest, the Germans calculated that the risk of supplying weapons to the Soviet Union was smaller than the benefit of lulling the USSR into a false sense of security. Stalin may indeed have fallen for the ruse, and have hoped that the trade's real mutual benefits would prevent a German attack. In that sense, Soviet policies may have been driven by the primacy of economics, whereas the primacy of ideology dominated on the German side. Or to put it another way, neither side had any illusions about their future conflict, but Stalin may well have hoped that economic benefits would be allowed to rule the day for longer.

Whereas John Röhl's and Hartmut Pogge von Strandman's essays foreground particular moments in the making of German foreign policy, Uta Poiger and Mary Nolan take a longer-term perspective, reminding us that Germany's relations with the outside world were subject to longer-term processes bridging particular political caesurae. Aspirations, influences, challenges, and structures, some peculiar to Germany, others not, outlived particular regimes, including the fall of the Third Reich. By taking, respectively, "imperialism" and "Americanization" as conceptual vantage points from which to assess Germany's foreign relations, Poiger and Nolan consciously deploy paradigms that have played an important role in Volker Berghahn's own work.

With imperialism, Uta Poiger introduces a term that has enjoyed only limited purchase in the historiography of modern Germany. Yet quite apart from its recent global revival as an object of discourse,<sup>19</sup> the concept of empire, as Poiger notes, raises intriguing questions not least because of the different international contexts in which it locates Germany, be it as a player in the pre-World War I colonial race, as an agent of domination in European conquest, or as a major power in the European and global economies after all dreams of formal empire had gone. But how far can the concept of imperialism link these very different moments in German policy, and, in particular, what relevance has it for the post-1945 period when Germany neither possessed nor sought any kind of formal empire?

Poiger traces the evolution of the imperialism paradigm from the 1970s onward, when it was primarily seen as a symptom of domestic tensions. While some Marxist scholars followed Hobson's and Lenin's classical view that imperialism was the symptom of a crisis of capitalist over-accumulation, most West German historians emphasized elite "bonapartism" in an undemocratic political system.<sup>20</sup> In recent years, however, it is the issue of race that has come to the fore. The experiences of colonial domination and the celebration of imperial grandeur are now linked by historians to far-reaching changes in the

imperial powers' identity, racial thinking, and self-perception—changes that extend well beyond the limited number of people directly involved in the colonial project.<sup>21</sup> This historiographical shift has had profound implications for the kind of continuities historians discern in German foreign policy. Of interest in the 1960s and 1970s was above all the marked similarities between Germany's pre-World War I and wartime foreign-policy ambitions and the territorial scope of Hitler's quest for *Lebensraum*. As historians grew more concerned with colonial practices and race consciousness, however, attention turned from continuities in territorial ambitions to precedents for genocide, especially since the historiography of the Holocaust itself has also seen a renewed interest in race and ideology, as Mark Roseman's contribution makes clear. Yet, as Poiger argues, the link between nineteenth-century colonialism and twentieth-century genocide are complex and by no means straightforward. Since imperialism was a shared European pursuit, the imperialist connection raises important questions about how specifically German are the Holocaust's causes.<sup>22</sup>

It is in the second part of her essay that Poiger makes her most original contribution by extending the imperialism paradigm to the post-1945 period. While Volker Berghahn has already made us aware of continuities in German business's search for informal economic empire that linked the *Kaiserreich* to the Federal Republic, Poiger focuses on advertising and commodity culture as a theater of perceptions and images of the outside world. By the 1920s, she notes a self-conscious shift away from the racist images of colonial domination of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries toward a self-fashioning of Germany as a cosmopolitan, postcolonial power. These images found their echoes in the explicitly anticolonial propaganda of the Nazi regime, which, of course, was accompanied by extremely brutal, indeed genocidal, forms of colonial domination in Eastern Europe. After 1945, Poiger argues, both Germanys were able to present themselves as post-imperial, though for different reasons. Using conventional Marxist analysis, the GDR simply denounced the Federal Republic as the successor to the capitalist imperialist tradition. The Federal Republic, by contrast, portrayed itself (and was indeed seen by some African countries) as relatively unencumbered by the legacies of imperialism in an age of decolonization. Yet, as Poiger demonstrates, West German advertisers continued to market their products through images of "nonwhite" populations, even though they did so in divergent ways and for different purposes. Racism thus did not disappear in postwar West Germany, although it became more subtle, more varied, and less overtly pernicious. In this sense, Poiger concludes convincingly, "imperialism" can serve as useful conceptual tool to analyze how different social groups within Germany related and continue to relate to what became known as the "Third World."

Mary Nolan's essay takes Germany's relationship and interaction with "America" as her vantage point for observing twentieth-century German his-

tory. From the 1920s on, at the latest, the United States became associated with cultural and economic modernity *per se*. In the post-1945 era, the U.S. was to be decisive in determining the shape and orientation of the new West German state. As Mary Nolan notes, the concept of “Americanization” is sometimes deployed open-endedly as a question about the degree of influence the U.S. exerted on Germany, but it is used also in a more focused and prescriptive way to denote a particular set of changes. As Nolan makes clear, Volker Berghahn’s work has lent the concept credibility and sophistication, not least because Berghahn acknowledges not only the U.S. role as exemplar, proselytizer and school-master, but also the recipients’ contribution in welcoming, modifying, and sometimes rejecting American models. As such, Americanization has much to tell us about a set of interactions in the fields of industrial organization, mass culture, consumerism, and gender roles that provides important insights into German history from the 1920s through to the 1950s and 1960s.

The core of Nolan’s analysis is nevertheless a critique of the concept, prompted by recognition that the recent upsurge of anti-Americanism in Germany has raised doubts about Germany’s successful “Americanization.” Above all Nolan believes that analysts of Americanization have brought normative assumptions of their own to bear, and have marginalized or excluded key facets of Germany’s development in a way that ultimately distorts our understanding of the nature of German modernity. The Americanization paradigm, for example, has tended to juxtapose a negative non-Americanization (or failed Americanization) before 1945 and a successful Americanization thereafter. Such morally drawn contrasts fail to do justice to the complex ways even Nazis appropriated facets of American practice before 1945, and also ignore those aspects of U.S. influence after 1945 that do not fit the benign model—for example the anti-black racism the U.S. imported via occupation. For all the discontinuities wrought by the end of the war, there has been an overly moralized and simplistic distinction made between good and bad modernities. Secondly, the bipolar focus on “Americanization” or “Sovietization” fails to capture the intra-European exchange of ideas and influences that generated a distinctly European model of modernity. This European alternative manifested itself especially in a more statist welfare capitalism, which even now has not fully converged with (and partly competes with) the neoliberal American model. Yet, while the Americanization of Germany was thus less complete than proponents of the concept like to suggest, the current surge of anti-Americanism in Germany does not primarily derive from traditional resistance to Americanization. The America against which Germany is now reacting—aggressively unilateral, committed to a religious crusade, pessimistically reliant on military might, hostile to international institutions and to anything more than the meanest welfare states—could hardly be more different from the kind of “New Deal” synthesis that characterized U.S. policy in the post-1945 years. In that

sense we are entering a new era, to which the familiar twentieth-century story of Americanization offers few clues. Germany, one might well conclude from Nolan's analysis, is in a number of respects now closer to the U.S. model it was offered in 1945 than is George Bush's America today.

## Smooth Surfaces, Murky Depths: German Society in the 1950s

The historiography of post-45 Germany has not generated grand theories of the stamp of the German *Sonderweg*. Indeed, the *Sonderweg* theory itself was predicated on the idea that after 1945 Germany (or at least West Germany) lost its peculiarity and became more like a normal, Western state, an idea that Ralf Dahrendorf had already examined with wit and sophistication in the 1960s.<sup>23</sup> In the 1970s, much historical research on the postwar era was in search for the explanations for "restoration," as a generation of left-wing students sought to explain the failure of radical dreams in the immediate postwar period.<sup>24</sup> But even here there was no dominant school, and writing was characterized by a large variety of positions on the question of new beginnings, continuity or restoration.<sup>25</sup> Since the 1980s, a growing number of sophisticated studies has appeared in the English language (and here Volker Berghahn, as well as his growing body of present and former doctoral students, has made a very significant contribution).<sup>26</sup> Attention has shifted increasingly from the immediate postwar years to the 1950s and now to the 1960s and 1970s; and there has also been a move away from questions about institutional change or continuity to broader inquiries about the way West Germany reacted to, remembered, and forgot its recent past. Indeed, the consistent theme in the essays represented in this section is the subtle mixture of remembering and forgetting, on the one hand, and the equally subtle balance between conservatism and innovation, on the other. These two sets of choices—about how to respond to and remember Nazism, war, and Holocaust and about what kinds of social and cultural innovations and outside influences to adopt—stood, as a number of the essays show, in a complex and sometimes paradoxical relationship to one another. Their interrelationship and shifting balance accounted for the intriguing mixture of stability, dynamism, and unease that characterized the Federal Republic in the 1950s.

As do some of the earlier essays in this volume, Ian Connor's contribution addresses a potentially unruly group that threatened to destabilize Germany's political and social equilibrium, in this case, the almost eight million refugees and expellees from the "lost" territories in the East. Connor's essay is part of a more recent trend, which has put into perspective the allegedly "quick" and smooth integration of German expellees.<sup>27</sup> While social-history studies have cast some doubt on this success story, Connor's essay traces the considerable

fears and anxieties that West German elites harbored about the expellees' potential radicalization. Against the background of National Socialism, fears of the "political mass" powerfully shaped elite behavior in postwar West Germany and fostered elites' willingness to cooperate with the occupation authorities. Connor's essay thus restores some contingency to the West German success story, which seemed much less self-evident to contemporary elites than it might appear in retrospect.<sup>28</sup>

At the same time, Connor's article also begins to explain why contemporary anxieties ultimately proved groundless. The experience of flight from the Red Army largely immunized expellee populations against any Communist inclination. By contrast, the attraction of right-wing splinter parties was initially much greater. Here, Connor emphasizes the crucial significance of Adenauer's CDU in attracting and eventually integrating expellees and refugees.<sup>29</sup> This "success," to be sure, depended not merely on the economic miracle that, unlike in Weimar, provided the economic leverage to pacify war-damaged groups through an extensive "equalization of burdens" law. It also came at considerable moral and political costs that entailed, for example, open toleration of highly compromised former Nazis in the highest echelons of the West German government. Political stability was indeed created on the basis of "murky depths," which would soon be pushed to the surface.

Connor's story of elite adaptations to the changed political circumstances of the postwar period is also a major theme in Alexander Nützenadel's essay. Nützenadel, like Connor, emphasizes the centrality of economics in postwar Germany. Yet his focus is less on the material basis of economic growth than on the theories that inspired the "miracle." In arguing that Keynesian economics had already substantially infiltrated the language of politics in the 1950s, Nützenadel revises the orthodox reading of the decade as being dominated by the neoliberal Freiburg school. As such, Nützenadel joins a number of historians who have challenged the idea of the 1950s as a conservative decade (though in this case, it should be noted that the "conservatism" of the Freiburg school in international terms was innovative in a Germany context in which old-fashioned liberalism had not shaped economic policy since the nineteenth century). Nützenadel's position here is not merely an echo of Werner Abelshauser's work, questioning whether neoliberal prescription were responsible for Germany's economic miracle.<sup>30</sup> He also questions neoliberalism's intellectual primacy more generally and argues that it lost ground to Keynesianism much earlier than had previously been assumed.

Nützenadel attributes Keynesianism's rapid march through the institutions to a series of factors, of which Germany's integration into international organizations and exposure to Anglo-American economic thinking assumed prime significance. The power and success of the U.S. economy and war effort made the modified U.S. version of Keynesianism very attractive to younger



German economists, an attraction bolstered by the kinds of academic interchange the U.S. did so much to support. Echoing Mary Nolan's plea for recognizing the complexity of transnational exchanges, Nützenadel shows that this was not just "Americanization" but that American ideas were also reformulated and processed through European institutions and individuals before being finally implemented in Germany. In addition, the Federal Republic's integration in a series of international economic institutions contributed to the rise of new forms of economic expertise that then provided the tools for macroeconomic intervention. Finally, shifting memories of Germany's economic experience in the past also facilitated the ascendancy of Keynesianism. By the 1950s, it was no longer the inflation of the 1920s or the overdominance of the Nazi state that served as most important historical reference points, but rather the Great Depression. The belief gained ground among economic experts that the "German catastrophe" could have been averted if the state had adopted Keynesian measures. Whereas Germany's historical experience had formerly seemed to caution less state involvement and less state spending, now the reading of Hitler's rise began to suggest the opposite. As a result, Keynesianism became part of a new consensus among all major parties that centered on the management of growth and demand as a technical, nonpolitical issue essential for democratic stability. This consensus began to unravel only in the 1970s, when a new international economic crisis discredited Keynesianism and led to the rise of neoliberalism and monetarism in West Germany and the Western world at large.

Mark Ruff's essay tells a similar story of "modernization under conservative auspices" as Nützenadel. But his focus is on the Catholic milieu and especially on Catholic youth culture. The Catholic church, as Ruff points out, emerged triumphant from the Nazi dictatorship and appeared to exert enormous political, social, and cultural authority in the early Federal Republic. Yet his essay reveals important tensions below this surface of an apparently stable and restorative Catholic milieu. In fact, his essay alerts us to the complexity of "conservativism" in the 1950s by unearthing important reform impulses within West German Catholicism, which eventually eroded the cohesion of that milieu itself.

Ruff also joins a number of other contributors in highlighting the significance of sex and gender for understanding the larger social and political dynamics of the postwar period. Like postwar society at large, the Catholic church needed to decide how far to absorb the more liberal approach to sex and marriage on offer from the U.S. and other modern influences. Church figures also sought to distance the Catholic church from that traditional association with a "feminized" sphere, which, as Michael Gross has shown, so incensed liberals in the *Kaiserreich*. Instead, post-1945 Catholics defined new forms of civilian male authority, which focused on the family and included, for example, greater

engagement of fathers with children. In that sense, the “modern patriarchalism” of the church contributed to the discourse of a more egalitarian family and promoted wider sociocultural changes in society at large. That these internal Catholic reform efforts eventually eroded the basis of the Catholic milieu itself constituted one of the ironic and, as Ruff argues, largely unintended consequences of conservative modernization in West Germany. In this sense, Ruff joins Connor and Nützenadel in demonstrating that the 1950s were not simply a period of restoration but a decade in which sub-milieus such as Catholicism and Socialism integrated themselves into larger social and political dynamics even at the price of their self-abrogation.

While Mark Ruff traces shifting Catholic attitudes as indicative of a larger modernization process, Dagmar Herzog’s essay leaves no doubt as to the deep conservatism of the 1950s, especially in matters relating to sex and gender. The church appears as a united conservative force, even if some of its adherents were more liberal or progressive on other matters. Yet her principal interest is the significance of sexual conservatism for managing the memory of Nazism. She argues that in the conservative reaction against Nazism in the early postwar period, Nazi licentiousness was foregrounded in ways that allowed the conventional morality of the church to appear unscathed by the recent encounter. The church thus became a symbol of the true, moral Germany that lost its way in modern times. Whereas the sexual conservatism of the 1950s can be understood only in relation to a particular memory of Nazism, the later progressive assault on sexual conservatism was directed against both the 1950s and the Nazi period. The Nazis now came to be seen as puritanical and sexually repressed. This, as Herzog argues, was a distortion of the real experience of Nazi Germany, which for heterosexuals had been a time of relative openness, if tightly controlled abortions. Yet it facilitated the making of certain kinds of progressive argument that linked antifascism to sexual liberation. Herzog’s essay thus challenges not only our understanding of the 1950s but also of the sexual revolution of the 1960s, which, as she argues in her recent book, was not just antifascist but “anti-postfascist” (i.e., directed against the sexual conservatism of the 1950s rather than the Nazi period itself.)<sup>31</sup> As such, the 1960s did not engender a more comprehensive memory of the Nazi past but rather a different and, one might argue, equally fictitious repackaging of it.

Jonathan Wiesen’s essay further complicates our picture of the 1950s. Like Ruff and Herzog, he too shows bourgeois Germany worrying about social mores, ethics, and family life, in this case via the activities and discussions of Rotary clubs. Yet while Ruff and others argue that even the early 1950s were not as restorative and conservative as they once seemed, Wiesen demonstrates the continued resonance well into the later 1950s of many of the conservative, cultural-critical tropes of the early postwar years, notably the juxtaposition

between *Vermassung* and personality. He is concerned with the reconstruction of a distinctly bourgeois ethics of individuality and civic-mindedness in the context of Rotary clubs in West Germany. By tracing the pre- and post-1945 history of American forms of bourgeois sociability, Wiesen offers an example of the kinds of nuanced analysis of “Americanization” that Nolan called for in her more theoretically oriented essay.

What stood in the way of a simple adoption of the American style and attitudes in German Rotary was, as Wiesen shows, not just traditional anxieties about mass culture and mass consumption but the central experience of National Socialism. Rotary clubs became an important site for managing a bourgeois memory of National Socialism. The organization’s outspoken commitment to “internationalism” compelled its members to emphasize their anti-Nazi convictions and thus to distance themselves, at least in public, from the Nazi past. At the same time, Wiesen also reveals the difficulties of the organization in coming to terms with more critical accounts of its history during the Nazi period. Yet, however mendacious and self-serving individual Rotarians’ accounts of their life in Nazi Germany may have been, Wiesen makes clear that any effort to reinvent a *collective* identity for the West German *Bürgertum* after 1945 could not evade the central legacy of National Socialism and of German elites’ complicity with it.

The essays by Robert Moeller and Heide Fehrenbach echo many of the themes discussed by the authors above, but they draw on a source that is particularly revealing for analyzing the history of the 1950s: movies. Before the onset of television, the 1950s were a decade of movie-going. Popular films spoke to a large part of the population. Their popularity was a sign of hitting a nerve, and they helped to set the tone of debates. Robert Moeller’s piece focuses on the highly successful film trilogy *08/15*, which looked at the experience of ordinary German soldiers during the Second World War. His reading shows how the film both manifested and helped shape the way in which the war was remembered in postwar Germany, not least via its exclusions, distinctions, and treatment of Germany’s former enemies. Produced in the context of West Germany’s rearmament and entry into NATO, the film was also in effect a comment on the nature of the future German army, and it offered prescriptive guidelines for the new “citizen in uniform.” At the same time, the film also showed how the (re)construction of the new German army and of German masculinity was intrinsically linked with memories of a catastrophic past. Moeller’s reading thus reveals a fascinating double-distancing from the past. Through its critique of the military, the film challenged the senseless militarism of the Wehrmacht and thus took a clear anti-Nazi stance. At the same time, *08/15* also invented a new phony past that was sanitized not just of German violence but of violence against Germans. In *08/15*, the real scars of the war and its aftermath were no longer visible. As such, the film offered a past

that many Germans indeed wanted “to see and hear” in 1955. Yet, as Moeller also makes clear, it was precisely the symbolic reconstitution of the nation through such critical but sanitized representations that then also paved the way for more realistic cinematic confrontations with the Second World War in later movies. To this day, film thus remains a central site for understanding the renegotiation and reinvention of the German past.

Heide Fehrenbach’s essay, like Moeller’s, uses cinematic representation as a way to unearth the social and cultural history of the 1950s. Her essay also joins Herzog’s and Wiesen’s contributions by examining how West Germans defined social and ethical behavior in the postwar period. All three contributions analyze the reconstruction of an ethical Germany in which the Nazi era provides an ever-present backdrop. This is notably true for Fehrenbach’s essay, which in examining race, considers an issue particularly burdened by the legacy of the Holocaust. Fehrenbach focuses on the small number of mixed-race children fathered by African-American occupation soldiers in postwar Germany. These children enjoyed a persistent symbolic power, which, however, evolved in meaning as the Federal Republic’s relationship to its past, to race, and to the outside world changed in the course of the postwar period.

Initially, mixed-race sex was a symbol of Germany’s violation. Women who were pregnant by African-American GIs were particularly likely to be given abortions. Yet postwar Germans soon eschewed open racism and prided themselves for the equal treatment of mixed-race children. At the same time, welfarist arguments still highlighted nonwhite children’s difference. Their removal through international adoption to the United States or to other countries perceived to be less racist was still advocated, though now ostensibly for the children’s own welfare. Fehrenbach cites the film “Toxie” as a particularly telling example of racism’s changing nature and function in postwar Germany. As in Ruff’s and Moeller’s accounts, here too we encounter postwar concern with the reconstruction of masculinity and new definitions of fatherhood. In the film, the intrusion into a white middle-class family of Toxi, a mixed-race foundling, eventually cures the German paterfamilias of his inherited prejudice and forces him to take on family responsibilities. Yet the real, African-American father’s appearance as *deus ex machina* at the conclusion of the film, ready to whisk the mixed-race child off to an affluent middle-class life in the U.S., offered the audience the payoff of restored “whiteness” in the German family. In this sense, Fehrenbach’s essay offers another perspective on the subtle interplay of both change and continuity in postwar West Germany.

As the essays in this section show, the historiography of the 1950s now constitutes one of the richest and most innovative subfields in the discipline. Long dominated by political and diplomatic approaches, the history of the postwar period has increasingly been written from the perspective of social and cultural history.<sup>32</sup> The 1950s now appear as an extremely dynamic period

in which West German society underwent crucial transformations. In retrospect, the 1950s were an “unruly” decade, marked by deep fissures and tensions that juxtaposed enormous pressures for change and modernization (often resulting from foreign, especially American influences) with more indigenous, conservative traditions. As the contributions to this volume make clear, the legacy of the Second World War and of the Holocaust permeated all facets of society, cutting across the traditional fault lines of class and gender, though it often remained below the surface in the murky depths of private lives and frequently traumatic memories. While the contributions to this volume thus subscribe to a critical historiography of West Germany, they also begin to suggest the reasons for the (always tenuous) stabilization of the Federal Republic. Most importantly, West German society managed to resolve its considerable internal tensions and conflicts without resorting to the internal or external violence that appeared so appealing in earlier periods of German history discussed in this book.

What distinguishes the current historiography of the 1950s (and, increasingly, of the 1960s and 1970s) from the literature on earlier periods is that it is often still being written by contemporaries who themselves lived through the times they are now consigning to history. This double frame of reference, which marks the particular epistemological problem of writing contemporary history or *Zeitgeschichte*, is addressed in Hanna Schissler’s concluding historiographical chapter. Schissler focuses on the links between historians’ subjectivities and historical writing, or, in other words, between history and memory. By introducing the concepts of pattern recognition and self-referentiality, Schissler shows how ways of doing history reflect researchers’ own experiences, be it the particular trajectories of their own biography, their academic socialization, or the national context in which they are writing. Schissler thus takes issue with the long-lasting objectivist stance that has informed German *Zeitgeschichte* in particular and shows how postmodernism has rendered boundaries, determinants of meaning, and worldviews more visible and has opened up new questions about agency and structure. In particular, historians have become aware of the ways in which memory shapes our understanding of history.<sup>33</sup> That recognition in turn implies that different groups and individuals bring differing memories to the fore. It boycotts any authoritative interpretation along the nation-state paradigm or along some dominant narrative, and brings into focus the uniqueness of individual as much as of group experiences. Those need to be negotiated, and from those experiences new narratives will be formed. The time of one dominant narrative has given way to the multiplicity of stories. History has transformed into histories.

In this context, Schissler explores differences in national approaches to contemporary history in Germany, Austria, and in the United States. Appropriately enough for a volume celebrating Volker Berghahn’s contribution to

modern German history, she highlights the evolving conversation between German and U.S. historians, noting the distinctive approaches that the latter have brought to German history, not least in the awareness of gender and racial difference. Such differences in national historiographies have resulted in a rich transatlantic cross-fertilization of historical research on Germany.

To be sure, German *Zeitgeschichte*, as indeed this present volume shows, remains centrally concerned with the origins and impact of Germany's catastrophe. Although both the *Sonderweg* paradigm and its rejection were based at least implicitly on cross-national comparisons, German history continues to be written, for perfectly legitimate reasons, as a distinct national history. At the same time, however, the global, post-territorial perspective found in recent work by Charles Maier, among others, poses a challenge to historical approaches that take the nation-state as their starting point or are writing within its confines.<sup>34</sup> Schissler argues that in coming years the Holocaust and Gulag narratives will begin to lose some of their power to control what still functions as a distinctly national narrative. As they do, emphasis on the "uniqueness" of German history will recede, while postcolonial and global questions and developments may well come to dominate our enquiry. Yet both approaches—the national and the global—do not need to be mutually exclusive, as Volker Berghahn's own oeuvre has so impressively documented. While his work has always been centrally concerned with the German catastrophe, he has continually reminded us of the larger international dimensions of German history. As such, a transnational and global perspective allows us to see how European and, indeed, world history both framed and were themselves altered by the conflicts, continuities, and catastrophes of modern German history.

## Notes

1. Dan Diner, *Zivilisationsbruch. Denken nach Auschwitz* (Frankfurt, 1988); a search on World Cat using the keyword "Holocaust" yields 23,790 publications since 1990 (27,243 for the keyword "World War II").

2. For a review of recent publications, see Robert Moeller, "What Has Coming to Terms with the Past Meant in the Federal Republic of Germany," *Central European History* 35 (2002): 223–56, and Alon Confino, "Telling about Germany: Narratives of Memory and Culture," *Journal of Modern History* 76 (2004): 389–416. See also Richard Bessel and Dirk Schumann, eds., *Life after Death: Approaches to the Social and Cultural History of Europe during the 1940s and 1950s* (Cambridge, 2003); for Germany, see Klaus Naumann, ed., *Nachkrieg in Deutschland* (Hamburg, 2001).

3. Friedrich Meinecke, *The German Catastrophe: Reflections and Recollections*, trans. Sidney B. Fay (Boston, 1963).

4. Michael Geyer and Konrad Jarausch, *Shattered Past: Reconstructing German Histories* (Princeton, 2003).

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17. Isabel Hull, *The Entourage of Kaiser Wilhelm II, 1888–1918*, (Cambridge, 1982); Thomas A. Kohut, *Wilhelm II and the Germans: A Study in Leadership* (Oxford, 1991); Johannes Paulmann, *Pomp und Politik: Monarchenbegegnungen in Europa zwischen Ancien Régime und Erstem Weltkrieg* (Paderborn, 2000); Giles MacDonogh, *The last Kaiser: Wilhelm the Impetuous* (London, 2000).

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20. Eckart Kehr, *Schlachtfloottenbau und Parteipolitik 1894–1901: Versuch eines Querschnitts durch die innenpolitischen, sozialen und ideologischen Voraussetzungen des deutschen Imperialismus* (Berlin, 1930); Hans Ulrich Wehler, *Bismarck und der Imperialismus* (Cologne, 1984). Wolfgang Mommsen, *Theories of Imperialism*, trans. P. S. Falla (New York, 1980).

21. Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, eds., *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley, 1996); Lora Wildenthal, *German Women for Empire, 1884–1945* (Durham, N.C., 2002).

22. In this way historians have revived interest in a connection first explicitly mooted by Hannah Arendt in the second part of her pathbreaking work *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (San Diego and New York, New Edition 1966). For the most recent intervention, see especially Isabel Hull, *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany* (Ithaca, 2005).

23. Ralf Dahrendorf, *Society and Democracy in Germany* (Garden City, N.Y., 1967).

24. Classic statements included Eberhardt Schmidt, *Die verhinderte Neuordnung* (Frankfurt am Main, 1970); Ernst-Ulrich Huster, Gerhard Kraiker et al., *Determinanten der westdeutschen Restauration 1945–1949* (Frankfurt am Main, 1972).

25. See the essay on restoration, continuity, or new beginnings in Carola Stern and Heinrich August Winkler, *Wendepunkte Deutscher Geschichte* (Frankfurt am Main, 1979).

26. The emerging body of research on East Germany has also claimed growing attention, though this has not been a primary area of interest for Berghahn and is thus not reflected in the current volume.

27. Paul Lüttinger, "Der Mythos der schnellen Integration. Eine empirische Analyse zur Integration der Vertriebenen," *Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 15 (1987): 20–36.

28. On this context, see Hans Peter Schwarz, "Die ausgebliebene Katastrophe. Eine Problemskizze zur Geschichte der Bundesrepublik," in *Den Staat denken. Theodor Eschenburg zum Fünfundachtzigsten*, ed. Hermann Rudolph (Berlin, 1993), 151–74.

29. On the CDU more generally, see also Frank Bösch, *Die Adenauer-CDU. Gründung, Aufstieg und Krise einer Erfolgspartei (1945–1969)* (Munich, 2001).

30. Werner Abelshauser, *Wirtschaftsgeschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (1945–1980)*, 1. Aufl. ed., Neue historische Bibliothek (Frankfurt am Main, 1983).



31. Dagmar Herzog, *Sex after Fascism: Memory and Morality in 20th Century Germany* (Princeton, 2005).

32. See, for example, Axel Schildt and Arnold Sywotteck, ed., *Modernisierung im Wiederaufbau. Die westdeutsche Gesellschaft der 50er Jahre* (Bonn, 1993); Robert G. Moeller, ed., *West Germany under Construction: Politics, Society, and Culture in the Adenauer Era* (Ann Arbor, 1997); Hanna Schissler, ed., *The Miracle Years: A Cultural History of West Germany* (Princeton, 2001).

33. Dan Diner, *Gedächtniszeiten. Über jüdische und andere Geschichten* (Munich, 2003), esp. "Von 'Gesellschaft' zu 'Gedächtnis'—Über historische Paradigmenwechsel," 7–15.

34. See Charles S. Maier, "Consigning the Twentieth Century to History: Alternative Narratives for the Modern Era," *American Historical Review* 105 (June 2000): 807–31; Michael Geyer and Charles Bright, "World History in a Global Age," *American Historical Review* 100 (1995): 1034–60.



**PART ONE**



**GERMAN ELITES AND  
AN UNRULY SOCIETY**





## CHAPTER 1

# *Kulturkampf and Geschlechterkampf* *Anti-Catholicism, Catholic Women, and the Public*

Michael B. Gross



By the time of the founding of the German empire in 1871, new and large movements alarmed the liberal middle-class and challenged its prescription for political, social, and sexual order. One of them was the dramatic revival of popular Catholicism underway since the Revolution of 1848. With a well-orchestrated and sweeping missionary campaign led by the Jesuit, Dominican, and Franciscan religious orders, the Catholic church had successfully repietized the Catholic population of Germany.<sup>1</sup> For middle-class liberals dedicated to modern progress—capitalist industrialization, rationalization, and secularization—the resurgence of the power of Catholicism and the influence of the Roman Church seemed to be a throwback to the superstition and fanaticism of the Middle Ages. Another challenge to the liberal vision for Germany was the reemergence of the women's movement for social and political emancipation in the mid-1860s. The women's movement, which had been suppressed after the Revolution in the subsequent decade of reaction, now insisted on access to education and professional life and, in its most radical version, political rights, including the right to vote. The *Frauenfrage*, as the question of women's roles in society and their access to the public spheres of social and political citizenship became known, was hotly debated the length and breadth of Germany. Men who participated in the organized and political liberal movement of the third quarter of the nineteenth century worried that the revival of the Catholic church and the reawakening of the women's movement might derail their cherished plans for a modern, united Germany.<sup>2</sup>

For German liberals during the founding period of the new empire, these two problems, the women's movement for access to the public and the presence of popular Catholicism in public, were inextricably intertwined. Recognizing this link is one important key to understanding the meaning of the

anti-Catholicism and the Kulturkampf of the 1870s, that is, the “cultural struggle” between, on the one hand, the state and liberals and, on the other hand, the Roman Catholic Church and Catholics, a conflict that contemporaries believed was the decisive turning point in German, and indeed, world history. Though the Kulturkampf and anti-Catholicism in the nineteenth century were once relegated to the margins of historiography, historians have come to appreciate that these are seminal themes that must be fully integrated into the history of modern Germany. In contrast to older historical studies, historians have realized over the last few years that the Kulturkampf was not simply an attempt to preserve the secular state from the reach of the Roman Catholic Church. Influential recent studies of German politics, society, and religion, for example, have viewed the church-state conflict variously as a campaign to break the threat of political Catholicism, an attempt to rebuild the German nation after unification according to the precepts of high-cultural Protestantism, or a battle between the “modern” outlook of liberal nationalists and “backward” Catholics.<sup>3</sup> The Kulturkampf was undoubtedly a broad enough campaign against the church to include all of these dimensions. Yet even these perspectives fall short of identifying all the fundamental issues that were at stake in liberal anti-Catholicism in general and the Kulturkampf in particular.

In this essay I would like to suggest that the Kulturkampf was a *Geschlechterkampf*, a more complex (and perhaps more interesting) contest between men and women for the public sphere than has been recognized in other views. Examining the Kulturkampf as a confrontation not simply between the state and the church but between men and women for access to the public permits a dramatically different appraisal of the meaning of anti-Catholicism in the period following the 1848 Revolution and of the origins of the state-sponsored anti-Catholic campaign in the 1870s. It makes clear why liberals during a period of sweeping social, economic, and political transformation (e.g., Catholic revival, the women’s movement, industrial expansion, a measure of democratization with the manhood suffrage introduced with the North German Confederation in 1867, and national unification), banded together with such dedication and fury, with the incessant invocation of masculine bravura, against the Catholic church as a threat to middle-class social, political, and sexual order.

## The Gender of Catholicism

In the late 1860s and through the 1870s, leaders of the Kulturkampf were as much infuriated by the topic of women in public as they were about the Catholic church. Leading *Kulturkämpfer* (“cultural warriors”) were out-spoken opponents of women’s emancipation, and they relentlessly attacked the feminist

movement. For the sake of specificity and brevity, two leading and representative Kulturkämpfer, one on the progressive left and the other on the nationalist right of the liberal political spectrum, serve to demonstrate that, whatever else might have divided them, German liberals of every hue were as much antifeminist as they were anti-Catholic. Rudolf Virchow, the secular scientist, leader of the Progressive Party in the Prussian Landtag and the one who later coined the phrase Kulturkampf, immediately attacked the reemergence of the women's movement.<sup>4</sup> He believed it was a self-evident axiom of nature that men belonged in public life while women belonged at home. He argued that it was a mistake to think that women should "enter the market of public life and actively participate in the disputes of the day."<sup>5</sup> Only at home as wives and mothers could women serve the fatherland and humanity.

On the liberal right, the Protestant nationalist Heinrich von Sybel, editor of the prestigious *Historische Zeitschrift* and cofounder in Bonn of the anti-clerical and anti-Catholic *Deutscher Verein*, argued that, however popular, the campaign for equal rights for women was merely throwing sand against the wind: the separation of male and female "spheres of life" (*Lebenssphäre*) outside and inside the family was an immutable law of nature and arguing otherwise was simply futile. The raising of children had to be left to the wife for the obvious reason that the "the crude hand" of the father was useless. A career for the mother outside the home would lead to the demise of her health, the destruction of the household, the ruin of her children, and the betrayal of the entire purpose of her existence.<sup>6</sup>

The idea that bourgeois ideology prescribed gendered separate spheres is, of course, a commonplace. It has been thoroughly examined by a generation of scholars of nineteenth-century Western society and is now so basic to understanding the period that historians take it for granted. Historians recognize too that this prescription should not be confused with the reality of social organization that included (and had always included) women outside the home. What is interesting, rather, is the coupling of the liberal middle-class ideology of separate spheres with anti-Catholicism and the anti-Catholic campaign in Germany. As Kulturkämpfer defended the public against the intrusion of the women's movement, they made sense of the relationship between liberalism and the Catholic church in terms of gender and the relationship between genders. Again for purposes of brevity, one prominent Kulturkämpfer, Johann Caspar Bluntschli, National Liberal in Baden, publicist of the *Staatswörterbuch*, and a rabid anti-Catholic, provides an illuminating example. In a series of essays in the liberal literary journal *Gegenwart*, Bluntschli argued that the Roman Church, just like a woman, was inclined toward irrationalism and sentiment rather than knowledge and thinking.<sup>7</sup> In the war with the Catholic church, the enemy of all modern culture, liberalism, and progress, Bluntschli warned that liberals had to remember that the church would use her feminine

wiles to exploit men to her advantage.<sup>8</sup> The church was like a woman who appeared innocent yet knew very well how to manipulate men now one way with her charms, now another way with her tears to attain her desires.

At the same time, if the Catholic church was a woman in liberal social-sexual ideology, then liberalism was a man, young and assertive. The model is again offered by Bluntschli, who argued in his highly influential *Charakter und Geist der politischen Parteien* that liberalism was “a young man who has his formal education behind him and steps forward into life fully aware of his strength and self-confidence.”<sup>9</sup> He has abandoned irrational fantasies for logical discourse: he tests the ground on which he plans to build with scientific criticism and precision. Above all, liberalism as a young man was distinguished by his strength of character and his desire for independence and freedom properly understood. Liberalism, according to Bluntschli, loathed the notion that “a mindless mass of humanity ruled by superstitions” (read Catholics) could ever be as free as “a manly *Volk* exercising thought and will.”<sup>10</sup> At the center of liberal anti-Catholicism was not simply the problem of religion but also that of women. For Kulturkämpfer the sweeping Catholic revival taking place at the missions, on pilgrimages, in religious associations, and in philanthropic work all over Germany was, therefore, always the issue of women in public.

## Catholic Women in Public

This liberal notion that Catholicism was feminine reflected the shifting demography of faith taking place within the church. Since the late eighteenth century women had been playing an increasingly prominent role in the Catholic church and in the lay practice of Catholicism.<sup>11</sup> Social historians of religion have argued that this constituted a feminization of the church, a transformation occurring not just in the German states but also in England, France, and the United States throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>12</sup> To contemporary observers and liberal critics of the Catholic revival in the two decades after the 1848 Revolution, however, the role of women in Catholicism seemed especially dramatic in the German states. Nowhere was this more evident than in the growth of female religious orders and congregations devoted to public philanthropy.<sup>13</sup> This too was part of the feminization of the church.

But the point here is that the new female religious congregations responded to revived demands by women for independence, emancipation, and larger social relevance. As nuns and sisters in the new religious congregations, Catholic women found that they could combine a religious life with a professional life. In Catholic schools, hospitals, orphanages, asylums, women's shelters, and reformatories they found rewarding public roles as teachers, nurses, welfare



workers, and administrative personnel.<sup>14</sup> Contemporary critics warned that the dramatic rise in the number of Catholic sisters devoted to work in philanthropic congregations indicated a shift in the role of the church in society. As one argued, "In the old [closed monastic] orders women are completely dead to the outside world. But in the new congregations they often have a far-reaching influence. The new congregations pursue mostly social work including education and instruction, caring for the poor and sick."<sup>15</sup>

Catholic women not only joined the new religious congregations in numbers that were revolutionary in the church. They also participated more prominently in Catholic communities and in the lay practice of Catholicism. Lay Catholic women were motivated to assume new roles in the church in unprecedented numbers by the thousands of dramatic missions taking place across Germany. The missionaries revived popular Catholicism, driving the laity back into church with terrifying sermons that invoked fire and brimstone and promised damnation for unrepentant sinners. The liberal press and state authorities believed the missionaries concentrated their efforts on women. Critics castigated the missions as disgusting displays of women in public at their worst: women swooning or prostrate before the missionaries, kissing their robes, weeping, and apparently mentally and emotionally unhinged.<sup>16</sup>

Social observers also complained that the missions disrupted family life. When mothers, they argued, surrendered themselves to religious fanaticism and flocked to the sermons at the missions, it was their children who suffered most: they were simply abandoned. "You very often see children hungry and freezing in the streets. They wander about uncared for, crying in front of the doorways and calling for their mothers. 'The mother? And where is the mother?'—'At the mission! At the mission!' sob the poor orphans."<sup>17</sup> The missions were extraordinary events in the otherwise quiet, even boring routines of rural, village life, so there was considerable truth to the accusations that they disrupted normal family routines. When the Franciscan mission came to the town of Dahl in 1857, for example, even the parish priest admitted in a report to his Bishop in Paderborn that "all the grownups streamed to the church, and many houses were just left to the children."<sup>18</sup> Women who flocked to the missions, joined religious associations, participated in the pilgrimages, and attended church events were, therefore, not simply an embarrassment in public, that sphere reserved for male-dominance and rational discourse. They betrayed their responsibilities as mothers and caretakers of the home.

In the decades following mid-century, lay women were drawn to the Catholic church because it offered one of the few social and public spaces available to them outside the workplace. Following a visit by missionaries to their communities, women established their own religious organizations. For wives and mothers the religious associations offered opportunities to share and discuss their problems, and they offered the rare chance to flee from the

responsibilities of the home and the family. Female religious organizations also attracted women because they offered some independence from male supervision, even if the priest remained.<sup>19</sup> More important, joining the new religious associations set up by the missionaries was one of the new opportunities for Catholic women to assume organizational and leadership positions previously denied them by men, and to do so with the assurance that it was a religious duty.

The new female religious organizations became so popular that among the laity women often dominated the religious life of the parish. One liberal critic complained that lay religious organizations and communities in many Catholic regions had become, in the absence of men, “mere ladies’ societies.”<sup>20</sup> Meanwhile, liberal newspapers like the *Vossische Zeitung* did not fail to notice the large attendance of women at the public assembly of the Catholic Association in Düsseldorf in 1869.<sup>21</sup> Despite the legal ban on female participation in political clubs and gatherings, in predominantly Catholic cities hundreds of women continued to participate in “lecture evenings” dedicated to clear political questions like state supervision of schools.<sup>22</sup> At the same time, Catholic women also helped organize mass pilgrimages to religious shrines like the one at *Marpingen* so vividly described and analyzed by David Blackbourn. The participants, critics remarked, were mostly female.<sup>23</sup>

Women’s new roles in the church reflected a shift in patterns of Catholic popular piety as well. The promulgation of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin by the Vatican in 1854 and introduction of new forms of Marian devotion were part of the rebirth of Roman Catholicism after mid-century. Hymns, prayers, and liturgical practices devoted to the Mother of Christ were encouraged by the Vatican and inculcated by missionaries all over Germany. These changes not only helped establish papal authority; they also promoted the more prominent role of women.<sup>24</sup> For Catholic women the new veneration of the Virgin sanctified motherhood, including the “female virtues” of humility and forbearance. Just as important, however, the Mother of Christ also offered an image of feminine grace and authority. In the world of Catholic women, the presence of Mary was everywhere and with her the model for feminine behavior. She was invoked in the recitation of the rosary, in the omnipresent pins, pictures, and statuettes that bore her image, and by the millions of Catholic women who were her namesake through the ages. All these things—the new Marian devotion, the religious philanthropic congregations, participation in religious associations, assemblies, pilgrimages, and missions—were dramatically changing the lives of Catholic women. As they inculcated piety in women and bolstered their status within the church, they also brought Catholic women into public life.

Of course, the church fathers were no more proponents of feminism than they were of democracy. Indeed, they continued to see women as large chil-