MODERN GERMANY

Society, economy and politics in the twentieth century
Modern Germany
Society, economy and politics in the twentieth century
Second edition

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Published by the Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RP
40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA
10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, Melbourne 3166, Australia

First published 1982
Second edition 1987

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available

British Library Cataloguing in Publication applied for.

ISBN 0-521-34505-7 hardback
ISBN 0-521-34748-3 paperback

Transferred to digital printing 2004
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Preface

The first edition of this volume contained rather a brief preface in which, in the limited space that was then available to me, I tried to bring out some of the salient features of my attempt to make sense of the confused and confusing history of modern Germany and to delineate how this study differed from other, older textbooks of this kind. This second edition provides me with an opportunity not only of expanding and updating Chapter 6, the Statistical Tables and the Select Bibliography, but also of elaborating on the perspectives I am trying to offer.

As I argued in the first edition, all textbooks tend to have a framework and to operate with broader underlying hypotheses. Their main themes reflect, in different ways, the authors’ overall views of recent German history. Seen in this light, it seems fair to say that the books listed in my bibliography were written essentially in a ‘failure-of-liberalism’ mould. This was clearly also the perspective of Gordon Craig’s Germany, which, conceived twenty years earlier, was finally published in 1978 and which, significantly, took the year 1866 as its starting point, later ending with the following ‘message’:

Adolf Hitler was nothing if not thorough. He destroyed the basis of the traditional resistance to modernity and liberalism just as completely as he had destroyed the structure of the Reichstaut and democracy. Because his work of demolition was so complete, he left the German people nothing that could be repaired or built upon. They had to begin all over again, a hard task perhaps, but a challenging one, in the facing of which they were not entirely bereft of guidance. For Hitler had not only restored to them the options that they had had a century earlier but had also bequeathed to them the memory of horror to help them with their choice.

Methodologically Craig and the other authors before him were indebted to political history, blended with a strong dose of intellectual history which had emerged as a genre in its own right in the United States during the 1950s. It was not that these books ignored social and economic developments, but the balance was clearly in favour of politics, diplomacy and high culture. At least it does not seem accidental that Craig, for example, started off with the following paragraph:
Preface

Is it a mistake to begin with Bismarck? So much is written these days, and so insistently, about the primary importance of economic and social forces in history that one runs the risk of being considered old-fashioned if one gives too much prominence to personality. Yet it is certainly unnecessary to apologize for introducing Bismarck’s name at the outset. If he had never risen to the top in Prussian politics, the unification of Germany would probably have taken place anyway, but surely not at the same time or in quite the same way as it did. Whatever may be said about the movement of economic forces, there is no burking the fact that the decision concerning the form unification would take was made, not in the area of economic and commercial policy, but on the battlefield of Königsgrätz on 3 July 1866.

It is for two reasons that I would like to draw the reader’s attention to these aspects of textbook-writing. To begin with, it would appear to be important to make the question of overt or covert assumptions the subject of classroom discussion, so that nobody is under the misapprehension that textbooks are straightforward summaries of objective knowledge. They are products of the general state of research reached by a particular time and of broader perceptions of Germany and its history prevalent in the Anglo-Saxon world. They can do no more than synthesise available knowledge and are more likely to reflect the wider scholarly Zeitgeist about the country in question than overturn the existing consensus. I would certainly ask readers to bear this in mind when they use this particular textbook.

However, I am not proposing to analyse how Germany, by failing to adopt liberalism and parliamentary democracy in the 1860s, ended up on the path of authoritarianism and, finally, of brutal dictatorship. Instead this volume approaches Germany from the angle of an industrialising and industrial society. Problems of socioeconomic change lie at the heart of my analysis, even if a good deal of space is, and indeed must be, devoted to dealing with the repercussions of rapid industrialisation at the level of domestic and external politics. In this sense, a textbook-writer is under an obligation to be comprehensive and cannot leave out questions of centralised power and influence, however fascinating ‘grass-roots’ history may be. The level of politics would seem to be all the more important because it provides a yardstick by which we may be able to measure the tensions and conflicts stemming from socioeconomic change. This yardstick is the intensity of violence manifested in German society at various times. As we shall see, the propensity to resort to high levels of violence, mostly directed towards the ‘internal enemy’, but twice in this century also towards external ones, was very considerable at least up to 1945. This is also why this book refuses to make a strict analytical distinction between domestic policy and foreign policy, between civil war and foreign war. Both are manifestations of a deeper internal crisis and hence offer a gauge with which to examine German history both before and after the Second World War.
Preface

This approach implies that Germany is seen here as a society in which socioeconomic and political power was unevenly distributed. However, I have shied away from operating with a dichotomous model of stratification which draws a dividing-line between those who own the means of production and those who do not. A one-sentence definition of the divisions and structured inequalities in German society is therefore not given here. Rather it is hoped that there will emerge from the first twenty pages or so what I would consider the peculiarities of that society. At this point only one crucial aspect shall be highlighted in anticipation of that later analysis which is also a recurrent theme in subsequent chapters: industrial Germany, though no doubt a class society, did not have a ruling class. Deep as the gulf between various classes was, at least in the first half of this century, there was also a lack of cohesion at the top of the socioeconomic and political pyramid. Time and again, as will be seen, the groups which possessed greater power and influence than the strata lower down the social scale found themselves disunited over how to deploy their superiority and over whether to deploy it towards a reformist adaptation to a changing societal environment or towards a stopping of the historical clock. In other words, if industrialisation led to the relentless growth of a large industrial working class and if this growth, in turn, was bound to have a destabilising effect on the existing social and political system, the question was as to whether a consensus could be forged among the power elites over how to deal with these developments ‘from below’. Were the new social groups which had the vote and now demanded greater and genuine participation in the decision-making processes at all levels to be integrated by a policy of concessions? Or were they to be ghettoised, politically emasculated and violently repressed?

This book is ultimately about the solutions found to these problems. It is therefore about winners and losers not only in the conflict between larger social collectives but also in the struggles between the reformists and the counter-revolutionaries at the top. We shall see that the balance, though precarious at various points, tended to tilt in favour of the latter camp in the first half of the twentieth century, with the reversal of the tide finally occurring in the second half. To trace this highly dramatic process which deeply affected the course of modern German history and, through two world wars, also the history of Europe and the rest of the world, was one of the considerations behind taking the chronology of this account beyond 1945. Apart from a conceptual, there was also a pragmatic reason: I thought the time had come to cover the past four decades and not just the Hohenzollern monarchy, the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich. This is also why I was only too glad to respond to the suggestion of the publishers to expand Chapter 6; for, having badly overshot the original word-limit for the first edition, there was no room left in 1980–1 for writing more than a brief survey of the 1960s and
Preface


The last chapter, I hope, is now more substantial, although technical constraints prevented me from changing and improving Chapters 1–5, except for a number of corrections of factual errors. This still leaves some glaring gaps. Some of these I would like to stand by, and not merely because I wanted to keep this book within manageable proportions. Thus I mentioned in my first edition that I had taken a number of deliberate short-cuts in my analysis of the Nazi dictatorship. A few reviewers picked this up and then charged me – I think, quite unfairly – with not having said enough about the Holocaust. The short-cut I actually took and had in mind was to say nothing about culture in the Third Reich. This was not because there is insufficient material on this topic, but rather because I wanted to emphasise the barbaric character of the Hitler regime. On the other hand, there are omissions which I now regret more than ever before, the most important being a more balanced treatment of women in German society. To some extent my present regrets are the result of a wider changing consciousness concerning the importance of this field. But looking back, I also remember wishing ten years ago that more research had been available. Clearly, future textbook-writers must, and will, take more seriously the task of integrating gender history into general German history, and there may even be some revasting of current modes of analysing the development of modern Germany. They will be assisted in this by a wealth of empirical material which has become available in recent years or is now in the pipeline. They may even be helped by the publication of a synthesis, produced by a courageous soul, which pulls the available detailed research together. Maybe Ute Frevert’s excellent Frauen-Geschichte (Frankfurt 1986) will soon be available in English.

Meanwhile the basic framework of this textbook remains unchanged. My book is an attempt to pursue the themes of social and political conflict and modes of conflict-resolution against the background of rapid industrialisation, and I remain painfully aware of the gaps in my analysis. Naturally, these inadequacies are my responsibility and not that of a number of friends and colleagues who helped me in my efforts to write a fresh account of modern German history. In particular I would like to thank Marion Berghahn, Ian Farr, Mary Fulbrook, Robin Liman, Tim Mason, Willie Paterson, Hartmut Pogge, Jill Stephenson, Barbara Weinberger, Bernd Wiesbrod and Jay Winter.

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Abbreviations

ADGB 
Allgemeiner Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund

AEG 
Allgemeine Elektrizitäts-Gesellschaft

AGVK 
Arbeitsgemeinschaft Vaterländischer Kampfverbände

ATB 
Arbeiter-Turn- und Sport-Bund

BdA 
Bundesvereinigung deutscher Arbeitgeberverbände

BDF 
Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine

BdI 
Bund der Industriellen

BDI 
Bundesverband der Deutschen Industrie

BDM 
Bund Deutscher Maedel

BHE 
Bund der Heimatvertriebenen und Enttriebten

BKV 
Betriebskollektivverträge

BP 
Bayern-Partei

BVP 
Bayerische Volkspartei

CDU 
Christlich-Demokratische Union

CSU 
Christlich-Soziale Union

DAF 
Deutsche Arbeitsfront

DDP 
Deutsche Demokratische Partei

DFU 
Deutsche Friedens-Union

DGB 
Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund

DKP 
Deutsch-Konservative Partei

DKP 
Deutsche Kommunistische Partei

DNVP 
Deutsch-Nationale Volkspartei

DP 
Deutsche Partei

DP 
Displaced Person

DRP 
Deutsche Reichspartei

DVFP 
Deutsch-Völkische Freiheitspartei

DVP 
Deutsche Volkspartei

DWK 
Deutsche Wirtschafts-Kommission

ECSC 
European Coal and Steel Community

EDC 
European Defence Community

EEC 
European Economic Community
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ERP</td>
<td>European Recovery Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FDGB</td>
<td>Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FDP</td>
<td>Freie Demokratische Partei</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FVP</td>
<td>Fortschrittliche Volkspartei</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GARIOA</td>
<td>Government Appropriations for Relief in Occupied Areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDR</td>
<td>German Democratic Republic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GHH</td>
<td>Gute Hoffnungshütte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GNP</td>
<td>Gross National Product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HO</td>
<td>Handelsorganisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KdF</td>
<td>Kraft durch Freude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KPD</td>
<td>Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KRA</td>
<td>Kriegsrohstoff-Abteilung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAG</td>
<td>Lastenausgleichsgesetz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LDPD</td>
<td>Liberal-Demokratische Partei Deutschlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MTS</td>
<td>Machine Tractor Station</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NATO</td>
<td>North Atlantic Treaty Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NLP</td>
<td>Nationalliberale Partei</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPD</td>
<td>Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSDAP</td>
<td>Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSV</td>
<td>Nationalsozialistische Volkswohlfahrt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NVA</td>
<td>Nationale Volksarmee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RDI</td>
<td>Reichsverband der Deutschen Industrie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RP</td>
<td>Reichspartei</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSHA</td>
<td>Reichssicherheitsamt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>Sturmabteilung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAP</td>
<td>Sozialistische Arbeiterpartei</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDS</td>
<td>Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SED</td>
<td>Sozialistische Einheitspartei</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHAEF</td>
<td>Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SfD</td>
<td>Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SRP</td>
<td>Sozialistische Reichspartei</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS</td>
<td>Schutzstaffel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USPD</td>
<td>Unabhängige Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VVVB</td>
<td>Vereinigte Vaterländische Verbände Bayerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WAV</td>
<td>Wirtschaftliche Aufbau-Vereinigung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WP</td>
<td>Wirtschaftspartei</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZAG</td>
<td>Zentralarbeitsgemeinschaft</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Glossary

(This glossary is designed to help students with some of the German, French or other unfamiliar terms in the text and is based on a list compiled by Professor L. E. Hoffman (Virginia State University). I would like to thank her for suggesting this aid and for making her list available for inclusion in this edition.)

**passim**

*burgerliche* (adj.): bourgeois; of or pertaining to the middle classes

nouveau riche (n., pl.): people newly rich

 Mittelstand (n., s.): the middle classes

Old: the professions and merchants, artisans

New: industrial entrepreneurs, technical experts

Sommus Episcopus (n., s.): supreme bishop, or the head of a religious denomination

Kulturkampf (n., s.): 'culture struggle'; Bismarck's persecution of the Catholic Church in Germany, 1872–8

Volkschule (n., pl.): elementary or primary schools

Mittelschule (n., s.): intermediate school, either academic or technical

höhere Schule (n., s.): secondary school, either academic (Gymnasium) or technical

Abitur (n., s.): examination taken on leaving secondary school and, by extension, the certificate earned by passing it. A necessary qualification to enter university studies

East Elbia: the territory east of the Elbe River that constituted the traditional heart of Prussia and the domain of the Junker aristocracy

Weltpolitik (n., s.): global politics; the policy aimed at establishing Germany as a major world power

va-banque: policies: to break the bank, go broke; to spend without thought of tomorrow

sacré: for himself; a disorderly retreat

ideal-typical: in the sociology of Max Weber (German, 1864–1920), an 'ideal type' is a theoretical model which displays all of the most characteristic qualities of a particular kind of thing or person

Zentralarbeitsgemeinschaft (ZAG): Central Labour Association

Gesindeordnungen (n., pl.): Labourers' ordinances, traditional laws which regulated the rights and terms of employment of domestic servants and farm-hands, usually to the advantage of employers

rentier (n., s.): a person who receives a fixed, unearned income, such as rents from land or dividends from stock
Glossary

p. 80  Bürgerbräukeller (n., s.): beer-hall found in many German towns; specifically, the one in Munich where Hitler and Ludendorff launched their right-wing revolt of 1923, which is therefore known as the Beer Hall Putsch

p. 82  Stammtisch (n., s.): table reserved for regular customers, common in neighbourhood beer-halls or cafes; by extension, the people (generally men) who sit there

p. 84  neue Sachlichkeit: the ‘New Objectivity’, an art style of the 1920s which stressed representational realism in reaction to abstract art

p. 86  Arbeiter-Turn- und-Sport-Bund (ATB): Workers’ Gymnastics and Sports Association

Volksbühne: the people’s theatre, or popular theatre movement

p. 88  de l’art: art for art’s sake, for no practical or educational purpose

Bund der Industriellen (BDI): the Manufacturers’ League

p. 90  volkisch(e) (adj.): pertaining to racial nationalism. The Volk, in German right-wing politics, were the tribal group, the ethnically ‘pure’ Germans

Vernunftrepublikaner (n., s. & pl.): ‘rational republicans’, people who supported the Weimar government for practical reasons rather than out of true belief in democracy

p. 103  Reichsverband der Deutschen Industrie (RDI): National Association of German Industry

Herr-im-Haus: the master of the house; can refer both to the father of a family, or to the owner of a business; in either case, implies paternalistic control

p. 105  Allgemeiner Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (ADGB): the German League of Trade Unions

p. 106  Hirsch-Dunckerischen Gewerkschaften: The Hirsch-Duncker trade unions, founded in the late nineteenth century and always small, were politically liberal (as distinct from the more conservative Christian unions and the more left-wing Socialist ones) and pursued gradual improvement of working conditions through negotiation with employers, not strikes or revolution.

p. 107  Ruhrarbeiterstreik: the 1928 conflict in the iron and metal-working industry of the Ruhr area

p. 109  Gutsherr(en) (n., pl.): the lords of the manor, the Junker landowners who had extensive powers over their tenants

Osthilfe (n., s.): ‘help to the East’; programme of subsidies to the large landowners East of the Elbe, demanded by the Nationalists

p. 110  Mein Kampf: ‘My Struggle’, Hitler’s autobiography and declaration of principles, written in prison in 1924

p. 111  Reichsländerbund: German Agricultural Association

p. 116  redundancy: in British usage, to be out of work because one’s labour is no longer required, laid off

p. 117  attente: attitude of watchful waiting for some significant event (from French ‘attente’, waiting)
Glossary

p. 119 Stahlhelm: ‘Steel Helmet’, a paramilitary organisation founded in late 1918, mainly of nationalistic veterans; the largest such group in Germany during the 1920s. It opposed the Versailles settlement, favouring an authoritarian regime to replace the Weimar Republic. Officially independent of political parties, but increasingly allied with the Nationalists.

p. 122 Reichskanzler: the paramilitary organisation of the parties of the Weimar coalition, primarily the Socialists; very large but never as ruthless as the extremists, and never trusted by army leaders

p. 124 front bench: the main leaders; from the British parliamentary system, where the government ministers sit on the front bench in the House of Commons

p. 130 Kampffront Schaar-Weiβ-Rot: political coalition of the conservative parties in the 1933 elections, named for the colours of the monarchist flag (black, white, and red)

p. 134 Jungvolk: Nazi organisation for young boys
Jugendbund: Nazi organisation for young girls
Bund Deutscher Mädel: league of German Girls
Nazi organisation for teenagers

p. 135 Hochburgen (n., pl.): chief cities

p. 141 ersetz (adj.): imitation, synthetic

p. 147 Rüstungsbetriebe (n., pl.): armaments factories

p. 149 Völkergenossen (n., pl.): folk or racial comrades; Nazi term for fellow Germans

p. 151 Weltflotte: world class navy

p. 153 Grossraumwirtschaft: closed economy based on domination of the entire continent of Europe

p. 161 telos: aim; ultimate purpose or goal (Greek)

p. 162 OKW: Oberkommando der Wehrmacht, or high command of the armed forces; replaced both the civilian war ministry and the general staff after 1938, bringing the armed forces under Hitler’s personal command. General Keitel was subservient to Hitler.

Reichssicherheitshauptamt (RSHA): central state security office of the SS, created 1939, headed by Reinhard Heydrich (to his death, 1942), became the central agency of the SS state, with power over both criminal and political offenders

p. 163 franc tirailleur: snipers

p. 164 Denkschrift: memorandum or written opinion

Untermensch (plural Untermenschen): subhuman; a term Nazis applied to members of ‘inferior’ races, especially the Slavs

p. 166 helots: slaves (from classical Greek)

p. 169 Reichsbahn: German railway agency

p. 170 Ausrottungspolitik: policy of extermination (of Jews)

p. 171 Gerichtsverfassungsgesetz: law governing the judicial branch of government, judges and courts
Glossary

p. 172 Volkschädling Decree: law of November 1938 branding Jews as ‘parasites on the Volk’ and thus excluding them from most economic activities and imposing a huge collective fine

p. 173 SD-Inland-Nachrichtendienst: SS domestic intelligence service, interested in the situation within Germany

Berichte zur innenpolitischen Lage: ‘Reports on the Internal Political Situation’

Sportpälast: sports palace or coliseum (in Berlin)

p. 175 Machtergreifung: Nazi seizure of power, 30 January 1933

p. 186 Land (plural Länder): state(s) within the Federal Republic, West Germany

p. 188 Volksstaat: republic, representative democracy

p. 199 Sozialstaat: social welfare state

p. 201 Schützen-, Kegel- and other associations: rifle clubs, bowling clubs, etc.

p. 202 Wohlstand für alle: prosperity for everyone

131er-Gesetz: Article 131 of the Basic Law of the Federal Republic déclassé: having come down in the world, lost social status

p. 204 Marktwirtschaft: market economy, competitive capitalism

Kartellgesetz: legislation outlawing cartels

Rhein-Ruhr-Klub: club of manufacturing and business leaders from the western industrial districts

p. 205 Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (DGB): (West) German Trade Union Association; federation similar to the AFL-CIO

p. 206 Mitbestimmung: worker participation in company management

Bundesvereinigung deutscher Arbeitgeberverbände (BdA): Federation of German Employers’ Associations

p. 209 Bundeswehr: West German armed forces, created as part of NATO

p. 210 Dienststelle Blank: Department Blank

démarche: announcement of a change in policy

p. 216 troika: trio, in Russian; originally a sled pulled by three horses, now refers to a ruling group of three

p. 233 Erziehungsgesellschaft: society oriented around education

Hochschulen (pl.): colleges, universities

p. 237 Kleinfürstentum (collective noun): lower middle classes

p. 243 Vermögensbildung: plan for wealth formation in the hands of the mass of the population

Konkretisierte Aktion: forum for collective economic policy planning involving the Economics Ministry, industrial associations and unions

p. 248 Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund (SDS): German Socialist
Glossary

Student Association, left-wing organisation especially active in the 1960s

p. 249 Mitteleuropa: Middle or Central Europe; a term often used by German expansionists to refer to their aim of German domination of the entire area

Grundvertrag: basic treaty between East and West Germany ratified in 1973

p. 253 Ihr da oben – wir da unten: ‘You up there – we down here’

p. 254 Aufbruchstimmung: optimistic mood to make a fresh start

p. 256 ‘Realos’: ‘Green’ realists

‘Fundamentalos’: ‘Green’ fundamentalists

p. 261 Illustrierten (pl.): glossy weekly in the style of Life, but more sensationalist

p. 264 Trümmerfrauen (pl.): literally ‘rubble women’, who lived in, and cleared up, postwar cities

p. 267 Radikalerlass: decree against radicals in the Civil Service