

Larry Eugene Jones (ed.), *The German Right in the Weimar Republic: Studies in the History of German Conservatism, Nationalism, and Antisemitism* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2014), 340 pages. ISBN: 9781782383529, RRP £60.00.

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Understanding the German Right in the Weimar Republic once seemed relatively straightforward: historians talked of a changing of the guard, as the old, elitist monarchists and Prussian conservatives of the Kaiserreich were supplanted by radical, demagogic nationalists better suited to the arena of mass politics. But the narrative of seamless transition from old to new Right is challenged in this collection of essays; as Larry Eugene Jones points out in the introduction, the non-Nazi Right in the Weimar Republic was a shifting, complex, even chaotic tapestry of groups, individuals and value systems that cannot easily be shoehorned into the categories 'old' or 'new'.

This central theme is vividly brought to life in four essays that focus on several prominent individuals who were symbolic of the Weimar Right's disjointed politics. Wolfram Pyta sets his sights on Paul von Hindenburg, the prominent First World War Field Marshal who later became the Weimar Republic's President. So often depicted as a paradigm of staid Prussian conservatism and monarchism, Hindenburg emerges from this chapter as a 'populist' post-war politician whose claim to authority was based on a charismatic cult of personality. As Pyta shows, though Hindenburg as President was initially an upholder of the Weimar Constitution, he became its gravedigger in seeking for an authoritarian solution to Germany's problems. An equally complex individual was Hindenburg's fellow Prussian conservative Count Cuno von Westarp, one-time leader of the German National Peoples' Party (DNVP) and the subject of Daniela Gasteiger's chapter. As she shows, Westarp may have begun the 1920s as a staunch monarchist opponent of the Republic, but he first came into conflict with Völkisch nationalists in the DNVP over the exclusion of Jews from the party, and then with his erstwhile monarchist allies after taking the DNVP into government. Joseph W. Bendersky's essay on the eminent legal scholar Carl Schmitt is also packed

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with ambiguity, with Schmitt sometimes working to salvage the Weimar Constitution but at the same time providing legal arguments for a Presidential dictatorship. Finally, Edward Snyder focuses on Friedrich von Bodelschwingh, a key figure in Weimar era 'social Protestantism' who oversaw a network of charitable hospitals for the mentally ill in Bielefeld and became increasingly open to the idea of eugenic solutions to social problems in the aftermath of the First World War. Taken together, these essays all tend to emphasise the inadequacy of the concepts 'old' and 'new' for understanding the complex and contradictory figures on Weimar's political right.

Three of the book's chapters focus specifically on anti-Semitism within the different institutions of the Right, and two of them present a similar argument: that right-wing organisations, though often home to radical anti-Semitic racists, were never quite dominated by them. In his second chapter, Larry Eugene Jones also focuses on the DNVP, which had a racist-Völkisch wing that pushed for an Aryan clause and the exclusion of Jews. But Jones argues that the influence of this faction varied considerably over the course of the 1920s; there was frequent discord between the Völkisch nationalists and those in the party for whom anti-Semitism was less of an obsession. Brian E. Crimm presents a case study of two paramilitary formations, the Stahlhelm and Young German Order, and posits a similar internal conflict between radical anti-Semites and those for whom it was a mere tactical device. For Crimm, these 'Combat Leagues' tended to dabble in the pragmatic exploitation of 'situational anti-Semitism' when it seemed politically advantageous but, as Weimar politics radicalised, this left them at a disadvantage in their competition with the Nazis, for whom anti-Semitism was anything but 'situational'. Finally, Ulrike Ehret argues that the Catholic Right in the Republic also had its fair share of anti-Semites and Völkisch nationalists, many of whom were in the unusual position of trying to divert support from the Catholic Centre Party toward the Protestant-Nationalist DNVP.

This volume also includes three chapters on the Pan-German League, which might be considered a little excessive, especially as two of them show just how anachronistic the League had become by the 1920s. Bjorn Hofmeister argues that the Pan-Germans were deeply uncomfortable with the 'mass politics' of rallies and paramilitary marches that became a central feature of the Weimar Republic, leading to their speedy eclipse by more dynamic outfits such as the Stahlhelm and, later, the Nazis. Barry A. Jackisch focuses specifically on this Pan-German/Nazi nexus. He shows how leading figures within the former came to distrust Hitler's movement almost as much as the Communists because a 'nationalist mass party' was still, in the end, 'a mass party', and thus incompatible with their elitist conception of politics. Rainer Hering argues that the advancement of radical nationalist ideas by prominent Pan-German academics was really an attempt to uphold a traditional, male-dominated

bourgeois order. Ultimately, though, by showing just how out of place and obsolete the Pan-German League was in the Weimar Republic, these chapters tend to reinforce the idea that it is in fact possible to speak of a transition from ‘old’ to ‘new’ right, which somewhat contravenes the stated aim of the volume.

Overall, this collection feels a little imbalanced. Three chapters on the Pan-German League and three on anti-Semitism leave little space for an exploration of other critical developments on the German Right. The processes of grass roots ‘rural insurrection’ and ‘bürgerliche radicalisation’ which have been amply documented by historians such as Jonathon Osmond and Peter Fritzsche, and which did so much to undermine the Weimar Republic, are conspicuous by their absence. Likewise, as vital as anti-Semitism undoubtedly was to the Weimar Right, there were other aspects of its worldview which might have merited closer attention. Indeed, as Jones himself mentions (p97), once Hugenberg became leader of the DNVP, he based his party programme not on anti-Semitism but on anti-Marxism – a crucial component of the Weimar Right’s ideology that is given too little treatment on these pages.

That said, these essays, taken together, do convincingly illustrate just how shambolic the Weimar-era Right actually was, with endemic infighting over personalities and ideas rendering it incapable of presenting a ‘unified opposition’ to the hated Republic. The chief beneficiaries of this disarray were, fatefully enough, the Nazis.

Joanna Bourke, *The Story of Pain: From Prayer to Painkillers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 396 pages.
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In her latest book, *The Story of Pain*, Joanna Bourke effectively argues a different way to view an ‘event’ which afflicts us all during our lives – pain. She accepts that all pain is real to the sufferer but that culture has an impact on how this is expressed and communicated. This review will look a little closer at this argument to see if such a claim can be convincing.

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