

EUROPEAN HISTORY QUARTERLY

Volume 20

Number 3

July 1990

Richard J. Evans

Klaus J. Bade, ed., *Population, Labour and Migration in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Germany*

435

Klaus J. Bade, ed., *Population, Labour and Migration in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Germany*, Oxford, Berg, 1987, xii + 200 pp; £15.00.

This is the first in a new series of books which aim 'to present the results of research by German historians and social scientists to readers in English-speaking countries'. Each volume is edited by a holder of the German Visiting Professorship at St Antony's College, Oxford (of whom there are two each year), and consists mainly of papers given by invited German speakers at the regular research seminar which it is the visiting professor's task to organize at the college. The appearance of this volume provides a welcome opportunity to underline the importance of

this professorship, which has now been in existence for over twenty years, and to record the debt which all those in this country who are interested in German history owe to Anthony Nicholls, who has been the driving force behind it. Making the results of German research available to English-speaking students is by no means an easy task. It requires a readiness not only to provide adequate translations of the often complex and rebarbative German in which professional historians in the Federal Republic are accustomed to present their work, but also to take account of the mass of research already available in English in the areas covered. Finally, the style and structure of German academic discourse, which often makes few concessions to the reader, needs translating into an idiom acceptable to English students as well. The book under review largely solves the first of these problems, despite a few regrettable lapses ('hereditary system' for 'inheritance system' on page 18, for example); but it is rather less successful in dealing with the other two.

The first three contributions are all very 'German' in style, with masses of numbered subsections, often very short, packed with statistics, dense and difficult to read. English students will find them hard going. Peter Marschalck begins with a survey of the demographic transition. He dates this as beginning in 1865, but the graph printed on the same page (23) shows that the birth rate did not begin to decline until 1873 and levelled off between 1880 and 1900, while the death rate did not begin to fall until the late 1880s. Marschalck does not consider the effect of the massive urbanization process of these decades on vital rates; yet, given the generally higher levels of mortality in the urban setting, it must have been considerable. This is one of many opportunities missed by author and editor of establishing links between the various contributions to the book. Marschalck's account of mortality is much weaker than his discussion of fertility, and says little about the crucial epidemiological aspects of falling death rates. His contribution amounts to a rather descriptive introduction to the demographic transition in Germany. It is not clearly enough related to the overall theme of the volume either by its author or by the editor. The second chapter, by Toni Pierenkemper, consists of very broad generalizations about the overall level of employment and standard of living in 'Germany' since the mid-nineteenth century. As global average is piled upon global average, one begins to wonder what the point of it all is. Regional, local and occupational variations, life-cycle structures and social inequalities are ignored, and the subjective determinants and effects of living standards and employment patterns are treated as if they did not exist. Yet these factors are ultimately far more important for social-historical analysis than the dubious averages so precariously constructed here. This is a highly unconvincing contribution which, once more, is not satisfactorily related to the overall theme of the book.

Next, in the first of two of his own contributions, the editor, drawing heavily on his article on the same subject in the *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* published in 1984, presents a survey of immigrant labour in Germany before 1914. Particularly interesting are his remarks on the state's attempts to control and supervise the influx of migrant workers. Bade goes on in the second half of this chapter to outline the rather different situation in the Weimar Republic. Disappointingly, however, he does not draw any conclusions from the material he presents, nor does he attempt any systematic comparisons between the Imperial period and the Weimar years. However, students will find this a very useful chapter, provided

they can pick their way through the dense undergrowth of statistical tables and logarithmic graphs.

The contribution by Dieter Langewiesche and Friedrich Lenger offers a welcome relief from the fact-clogged outline surveys that precede it. The two authors present a well-constructed and very readable analysis of research on internal migration in the second half of the nineteenth century. They spell out with admirable clarity the methodological and statistical problems of this research, and point up its implications for the study of a variety of important topics in German social history. Not least because it addresses a limited topic on which relatively little research has so far been carried out, this is the most successful contribution to the book. Langewiesche and Lenger show that high rates of internal migration before 1914 did mean a degree of disruption and uprooting for those involved, despite continuing family ties with their place of origin. When workers migrated they lost their residence qualifications for local elections and so contributed to the weakness of the Social Democratic party at this level. The implications for occupational and trade union solidarity are no less important, and also receive due attention from the two authors. Although more might perhaps have been said about the relationship of migration to class formation, this remains an essential account of recent work and should be required reading for students of nineteenth-century German social and economic history.

In the next chapter, Christoph Klessmann shifts the focus on to the migration of Polish workers in the Ruhr. Much if not most of what he has to say will already be familiar to English readers from the work of Stephen Hickey (which he unfortunately fails to mention). Klessmann is rightly critical of Richard Murphy's recent attempt to present Polish immigration as a success story; more space might have been devoted to his arguments in view of the familiarity of the preceding material. Reinhard Doerries also traverses familiar territory with his contribution on German transatlantic migration from 1815 to 1939, but what he offers is a very clear and level-headed account of the current state of research in this area, combining the presentation of basic statistics with a sensible assessment of the various factors that drove people to leave. This, too, will be required reading for English students of the subject, and not just for undergraduates. The two concluding chapters deal with the question of the *Gastarbeiter* (or 'guest workers' in Germany) since the First World War. Some overlaps here with the book's earlier coverage of questions like emigration from Nazi Germany could have been eliminated, and Bade's brief account of foreign slave labour in the Third Reich really deserved more space to give the subject its proper weight. Editorial indulgence has also allowed a substantial degree of repetition between this chapter and the concluding one, on the 'guest workers', by Hermann Korte. Both authors present basic findings, discuss the problem of integration, and conclude by demanding more rights for the long-term 'guest workers'. Korte's account of major West German sociological approaches to the problem is particularly valuable.

Greater coherence could obviously have been achieved by the contributors if they had been tied more closely to a carefully defined set of central questions; as it stands, the volume never really comes up with a clear model of the relationships between demographic change, labour markets and migration patterns. Yet enough is said about these questions in most of the contributions to make this a well-knit set of essays despite its inevitable overlaps and flaws. The most important fact to emerge from the book as a whole is one which is scarcely mentioned by any of

the authors: the place of labour shortage and immigration (temporary or permanent, forced or voluntary) as a central feature in the continuity of German history over the last hundred years. Here 1945 was no 'zero hour' at all. The millions of 'guest workers' who streamed into the Federal Republic in the 1960s had been preceded by many more millions of refugees and expellees in the second half of the 1940s, slave labourers in the first half of the 1940s, and Polish, Masurian, Italian and other migrant labourers before the First World War. Despite all the fluctuations and upheavals in foreign labour policy over the century in question (the subject of a great deal of excellent research by Bade himself), this was a significant continuity whose impact on German society and German attitudes in this period has still to be fully explored. Given the international dimensions of the problem, the best approach to such a study would seem to be a comparative one. There is a great deal of argument in West Germany over the question of whether the 'guest workers' are 'immigrants', but this rather tends to bypass the fact that a racially and culturally ghettoized and disadvantaged underclass of unemployed or menial labourers and their families is also reproducing itself in other European countries, such as Britain, despite the fact that their deprivation of formal civil equality and citizenship in Germany is not necessarily paralleled in other countries. The true model for modern European societies in this respect may well be not the United States, with its complex amalgam of upwardly mobile waves of immigrants, but the harsher racial and economic dichotomies of the Republic of South Africa.

Richard J. Evans

Birkbeck College, University of London