social-science concepts to "fit" the historical sources. And it is especially important not to forget the contributions, and indeed the suffering, of those historians forced to flee Nazi persecution after 1933. But if, as a previous volume in this series has shown, German historical scholarship in the postwar era was significantly shaped by those who had left after 1933, it was also profoundly influenced by those who had stayed behind.

In fairness to Brunner and Conze, one should note that the debate over the role of social-science concepts in historical analysis has resurfaced in the Alltagsgeschichte movement. One of its leading representatives, Hans Medick, wrote in pointed reference to the historical social science of the Bielefeld school that "it is no solution simply to appropriate or borrow concepts and theories from the social sciences and then integrate them into works of history." Medick, "'Missionäre im Ruderboot?' Ethnologische Erkenntnisweisen als Herausforderung an die Sozialgeschichte," in Alltagsgeschichte: Zur Rekonstruktion historischer Erfahrungen und Lebensweisen, ed. Alf Lüdtke (Frankfurt and New York, 1989), 52.

On 25 April 1957 at about 4 p.m., seven German historians convened at the spa hotel of Bad Ems for a conference entitled "The Social History of the Modern World." In his keynote address to the conference, which had been financed by the cultural department of the Federal Republic's Home Office, the Heidelberg historian Werner Conze outlined the group's future task. For Conze, the purpose of the group was to subject Hans Freyer's "theory of the present age" to critical and historical scrutiny, either revising it or giving it a solid underpinning. Conze argued that the term "social history" was too narrow to describe this historiographical approach, preferring instead "structural history (Strukturgeschichte) of the modern world." Since traditional historiography could no longer master the problems of the modern world, asserted Conze, it was necessary "to adapt the historical method to these problems."

So read the first sentences of the minutes of this inaugural meeting. Now we all know very well that the history of scholarship is the history of processes par excellence. But to the extent that a date can be chosen to mark a significant turning point in the history of a discipline, then 25 April 1957 must be counted as one in the history of German historical scholarship. For the first time a new form of history was openly demanded, and the new concept of structural history was advanced and even institutionalized.

Theodor Schieder, the Cologne historian and a good friend of...
Werner Conze, read the report on the conference four weeks later. In a letter to Conze, he noted with satisfaction: “The really necessary and decisive question has finally been touched upon. In my opinion, the Ems circle may become the starting-point for a profoundly new way of thinking within our discipline.” I suspect that on reflection, many historians will agree with Schieder. Indeed, it seems indisputable that the institutional origins of “modern German social history” date from the Bad Ems conference and its background. But what were the sources from which the participants at Bad Ems drew their ideas? Which historiographical models were important to them, and in which traditions were these historians rooted? Who were the forerunners of this “modern” social history?

To date, these questions have hardly been addressed in German historiography. When Hans-Ulrich Wehler published his seminal anthology on “modern German social history” in 1966, he pointed to the “power of social revolutions and social forces,” the “strong impulse of an immediate experience of life,” that lay behind the revival of social history in postwar West Germany. In rereading the essays in this book I found it striking that both Wehler and Hans Mommsen drew from the German sociologist Hans Freyer to attack the traditional history of ideas and politics, and to demonstrate in 1966 “that history consists of the real change of power constellations in society” (and not in politics). Preparing my book on German historical scholarship after 1945, I became especially interested in those scholars, like Freyer, who seemed to form a bridge between the historical scholarship of the mid-1930s and those of the mid-1960s. What makes the genealogy of postwar social history such a fascinating problem is the fact that three of the participants in the Bad Ems conference – Werner Conze, Otto Brunner and Gunther Ipsen – had passed their academically formative years and started their careers mainly during the last period of the Weimar Republic and under the National Socialist regime. Hence the origins of modern German social history must be considered within the wider context of continuities in twentieth-century German historiography, which was the theme of the conference on which this book is based. I will try to pursue this question by focusing on the connections between the historical scholarship of the late Weimar Republic and Nazi era, and its subsequent development in the early Federal Republic.

For obvious reasons, the “German catastrophe” of 1945 will serve as the axis of our analysis. Hence we must first cast a retrospective glance at the historical discipline during the National Socialist era, and then proceed to an evaluation of the period after 1945. By taking a fresh look at the changes that marked historical scholarship during this period, such an approach will help to shed light on the central theme of this book. But to understand the obstacles that inhibited innovation in the discipline after 1945, it is not enough to focus on the historical profession’s involvement with National Socialism; we must go back and survey the development of German historical scholarship during the Weimar Republic.

The scholarship of the 1920s and 1930s reflected the structural problems of the Republic as a whole. The majority of historians sided politically with the enemies of the Republic, or were at best “republicans of the head and not of the heart” (Vernunftrepublikaner). Fierce attempts to “revise” the Treaty of Versailles, criticism of democracy, and distance from if not overt hostility to the constitution characterized scholarly works of the period – even if, or rather, especially if, they were concerned with Freiherr vom Stein, the revolution of 1848, or the person of Bismarck. These positions did not represent a break with the traditional orientation of the discipline, as Georg Iggers has observed; indeed, there existed important points of intersection between the views of national-conservative historians and National Socialist ideology. As for historical methodology, the prevailing approach was some variant of a hyper-individualistic historicism, characterized by an almost hypnotic and narrow orientation toward Ranke. This historicism distinguished itself sharply from the methods of sociology, which Georg von Below in particular had attacked as inferior to the romantic conceptions of the Volk developed in the early nineteenth century.

So far I have been following the conventional view of German historical scholarship during the Weimar era. But this interpretation is misleading insofar as it neglects an important new development – the emergence of a new “völkische” conception of history. This


approach came increasingly into vogue from the 1920s onward, and signified a change in the traditional orientation of German-language scholarship. For the term “Volk,” as it had evolved after Versailles from the obvious difference between the “cultural nation” (Kultur nation) and the “state-nation” (Staatsnation), required new methodological instruments that were not found in the traditional tool-box of German historians. The concept of “Volksstum” gained widespread currency among German-language historians both inside and outside the Reich. The proliferation of “Kulturraumfor schung,” with its cultural and regional focus and its concern with “organic unities,” required mastering a variety of methods and disciplines in order to carry out empirical research in the field. In particular, the strong scholarly interest in Eastern Europe (Ostfor schung) combined revisionist political goals with new methods of empirical research.7

These new methods were taken from ethnography (Volkskunde), the historical study of settlement (Siedlungsforschung), linguistics, and detailed local and regional social and economic history. The program of a “holistic folk history” (ganzeitliche Volksgeschichte), which was dismissed by some state authorities in 1930 as a “mere fashion” or a newfangled pseudo-discipline, increasingly posed a threat to the traditional concept of the nation-state or Machtstaat as the preeminent category of historical and even cultural-historical scholarship. Representative of the older approach was Friedrich Meinecke’s critique in 1910 of Walter Goetz’s essay, “History and Cultural History.” Here Meinecke considered the state the “most comprehensive historical force,” and accordingly insisted that even cultural history should put the state in the foreground of its research.8

The growing importance of the category of “Volk” and of “Volks geschichte” had a crucial impact on the subsequent development of German-language historical scholarship. But the concept of folk history was never elaborated very fully, even though advocates like Adolf Helbok tried to postulate a “new science of history” on its basis.9 Erich Keyser propagated a new “political history of the people,” exhorting his colleagues to be political historians by adapting their research and teaching “incessantly and in all situations to the political demands of [their] Volk.”10 The medievalist Hermann Heimpel wrote in 1938 that German history in the late Middle Ages was actually “folk history”11; Otto Brunner similarly seized upon the term “political folk-history” (politische Volksgeschichte), which he integrated into his anti-liberal conceptual critique and made the centerpiece for a new understanding of medieval and early-modern history.12

As mentioned earlier, any assessment of German-language historical scholarship in the immediate postwar years must take into consideration the relationship between the historical discipline and National Socialism. Only in this way can one judge the extent to which changes were necessary and possible after 1945. During the postwar years, much of the discussion on the relationship between National Socialism and the academic profession bordered on excogitation. Much emphasis was placed on the existence of “Nazi-free” spheres within the universities, thereby obscuring the full extent of active support or acquiescence. It was repeatedly claimed that academic teaching and research had been concerned exclusively with scholarly issues, and hence were largely immune to politicization. Suffice it to say that in 1953 and again in 1957, the Federal Constitutional Court described this claim as “so utterly absurd that it is not necessary to refute it in detail.”13 This judgment, I think, remains valid; it is at any rate obvious that the postwar “purge” of universities, which was carried out from above in an often inconsistent fashion, was not accompanied by a thorough academic discussion of the relationship between professional scholarship and National Socialist ideology. After 1951, as a result of Article 131 of the Federal Constitution, priority was instead given to the practical question of how to reintegrate those professors who had been dismissed immediately after the war.14 Even those professors with untarnished

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8 In Historische Zeitschrift 105 (1910), 182.
9 Adolf Helbok, "Durch Volksgeschichte zur Neuform unserer Staatsgeschichte," in Volks-
pasts showed little inclination to reflect on the specific reasons why their respective disciplines might have been predisposed to National Socialism. With the work of the denazification courts still in progress, and with professional careers still at stake, it was not yet possible to begin a careful analysis of individual reactions and survival strategies.15

The situation changed only in the early 1960s, when some universities began organizing lecture series on their role under the National Socialist regime. At the same time there appeared a number of more detailed and highly useful studies – here I need only mention the works of Helmut Heiber and Karl Ferdinand Werner, which influenced me deeply as a student at the Free University of Berlin in the late 1960s.16 These and subsequent studies17 present us with a rather ambiguous picture. Institutionally, the historical discipline appen	ember (1983), November 1983 (H. Holtkotten), 47; M. Wenzel, *Das Gesetz zu Artikel 131 GG und die Hochschullehrer* (Frankfurt am Main, 1983).


16 H. Heiber, *Walter Frank und sein Reichsinstitut für Geschichte des neuen Deutschlands* (Stuttgart, 1966); K. F. Werner, *Das NS-Geschichtsbild und die Geschichtswissenschaft* (Stuttgart, 1967); K. Schreiner’s more recent “Fürernull, Rasse, Reich. Wissenschaft von der Geschichte nach der nationalsozialistischen Machtergreifung,” in Wissenschaft im Dritten Reich, ed. P. Lundgreen (Frankfurt, 1985), 163–252, has broadened our understanding of medieval histor
tonal scholarship during the Third Reich.

17 On professional acculturation, see, for example, V. Loscarn, *Nationalsozialismus und Antike. Studien zur Entwicklung des Fachs Alte Geschichte* (Hamburg, 1977); for Roman history in particular see K. Christ, *Römische Geschichte und deutsche Geschichtswissenschaft* (Munich, 1982), 195ff. On the SS-sponsored “Auralan Heritage Foundation” (Altnerven), see the study by Mi

15 The two oldest institutional centers of German historical scholar

16 German Historiography, 1930s to 1950s
Winfried Schulze

umenta and Karl Alexander von Müller and Heinrich Ritter von Srbik at the Historical Commission. Their complicity with the regime is indisputable, even if one takes into account their various disputes with the National Socialist Administration of Cultural Affairs. As for the Imperial Commission for History (Historische Reichskommission) founded in 1928, it was dissolved and replaced in 1935 by the "Reichsinstitut" under the direction of Walter Frank; the Historical Institute of the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gesellschaft, which had been led by Paul F. Kehr, was joined to it.

With the exception of the Historische Zeitschrift and the Deutsches Archiv, the editorial boards of most important historical periodicals were not changed after 1933. Only one journal, Vergangenheit und Gegenwart, was definitively “nazified” when its founder and editor, Wilhelm Mommsen, was dismissed. The Historische Vierteljahreschrift was already facing a financial crisis when the withdrawal of support from public authorities put an end to its publication. Other periodicals chose to focus on specialized subjects while occasionally paying ideological lip service to the “demands of the present.”

But even the ideologically “streamlined” Historische Zeitschrift, under its new editor Karl Alexander von Müller, did not always fulfill the expectations of the National Socialist regime. Indeed, other enterprises sponsored by the regime, such as the “Ancestral Heritage Foundation” (Ahnenerbe) of the SS, were unsuccessful in their efforts to recast historical scholarship along party lines. The historical profession showed a remarkable degree of “inertia,” to avoid the misleading term of resistance. There was no smooth cooperation between the Nazis and leading historians, and the internal quarrels and rivalries that were typical of the regime reduced its ability to control the discipline. That the regime was unable to impose a monopoly on historical interpretation is evident from the resistance of medievalists to the Nazi attempt to portray Charlemagne as “the slaughterer of the Saxons.” And although the conference of German historians at Erfurt in 1937 was dominated by the presence of Walter Frank, it did not meet the high expectations of his retinue of younger party historians. The editor of the didactic journal Vergangenheit und Gegenwart (which I do not dare translate as Past and Present), Moritz Edelmann, demanded in a critique of the Erfurt conference that historical science should henceforth “liberate” itself “from the dependence on the written source.” Historians should turn instead to the category of “historical greatness,” “which is innate in all of us and is revived by the greatness of the present age.”

To do justice to the complexity of our problem, we have to keep in mind that there was sufficient scope for a variety of responses to the National Socialist regime. These ranged from the courageous protests of men like Walter Goetz, Franz Schnabel, Alfred von Martin, or Carl Erdmann, to widespread outward conformity, to the few examples of outright partisanship on the part of historians who gave shape and content to vague National Socialist concepts and who even stooped to personal attacks on colleagues whose political opinions they found “odious.” The prevailing response was the often praised “unpolitical” posture of outward conformity, and a retreat into less controversial historical subjects. Open protests, let alone resistance, were the exception. Fritz Kern, a medievalist at the University of Bonn, was a remarkably “political” professor who voiced criticism of the regime on several occasions. Kern also supported a communist student group centered around his younger Marxist colleague Walter Markov, even after the latter had been imprisoned at Siegburg in 1936. In 1945 Kern managed to escape from the Sicherheitsdienst (the German Security Service) to Switzerland, having been persecuted for his support of the military resistance to the Nazi regime. Gerhard Ritter’s active support of the resistance movement, with whose aims Friedrich Baethgen and Peter Rassow were also in sympathy, deserves mention as well.

But on the whole, the conservative consensus within the profession proved highly receptive to a national or “folkish” reorientation of the guild. Given the national-conservative disposition of most historians, there were important affinities between the profession at large and the National Socialist movement. As Karl Alexander von Müller correctly observed in 1936, “the historical discipline does not come empty-handed to the new German state and its youth.” In a sharp exchange in 1946 between the Berlin historian Fritz Hartung and his medievalist colleague Fritz Rörg in the latter’s pro-Marxist newspaper articles, Hartung chided Rörg for attacking imperialism after having earlier celebrated Hitler’s aggressive wars and attacked

the "diabolic principle of the European balance of power." But statements of this directness are rather seldom to be found in the archives. At any rate, the anti-liberal attitudes that one finds, say, in Rudolf Stadelmann or Wilhelm Mommsen, characterized most members of the profession and facilitated an understanding between historians and the regime. At the International Historical Congress in Warsaw in August of 1933, the Danish historian Aage Friis voiced his alarm at the Nazi takeover and was shocked to find German historians "compliant and weak" in the face of National Socialism. While they recognized and condemned acts of racial discrimination and other injustices perpetrated by the regime, they still believed that other aspects of the government's policy deserved support and were "promising" for the future. When the medievalist Percy Ernst Schramm met with the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1937, their conversation turned to the attitude of German professors toward National Socialism. Schramm tried to describe his own dilemma: He confessed that although he was not a member of the party, he had to ask himself every day how much he agreed with its aims and could never come to a definite answer. One evening he found himself in agreement with the party, while another evening he was critical, and this ambivalence seemed to him typical of German intellectuals of the day.

All of this explains why it was not necessary for the Nazi regime to continue the "purge" of university faculties after the dismissal of Jewish scholars. Only a handful of liberal or religious dissidents deviated from the conservative consensus that prevailed in the profession, although most scholars could hardly conceal their concern about some of the bizarre ideas of history propagated by the Nazis. The so-called "camps" (Lager), district organizations within the National Socialist teachers association, were entrusted with providing the historical underpinning of the Nazi concepts of race, Raum, and struggle; they were aided by the publications of the SS-sponsored Ancestral Heritage Foundation and of Walter Frank's Reichsinstitut. As noted earlier, most historians chose to pay lip-service to this program while continuing their own historical studies. The "triumphant march" of the German army into France in 1940 was hailed with enthusiasm by younger university teachers like Günther Franz, who enthusiastically declared his readiness "to hurry to do my duty at the front at the University of Strasbourg." Even the more critical Meinecke was delighted when he learned that Strasbourg was German again. In 1965, Hans Rothfels noted in a self-critical tone reflecting his own experience in Germany up to 1938: "Without a doubt, the fierce opposition of many historians toward the republican-democratic state and the parliamentary system represented a point of affinity with National Socialist propaganda." Affinity, however, did not preclude eventual detachment. Many historians otherwise receptive to the Nazi movement became involved in conflicts with local party chiefs, overzealous student leaders, and rectors who toed the party line. This blurs our picture to some extent and sometimes makes it difficult to draw a clear line between collaboration and resistance.

Arthur Rosenberg, who had opted for emigration, wrote in 1938: "Some day it will be seen that there was no active and critical historical research after 1933, that it indeed could not have existed, and that therefore the critical historical scholarship of Germany had survived solely in emigration." This judgment seems to be very harsh indeed. It hardly does justice to those few historians who dared to oppose the degradation of their discipline, and who as a consequence risked the suppression of their academic work and even dismissal. Yet Rosenberg's verdict is surely correct if "critical" historical scholarship is understood not merely in the philological sense, but in the broader terms of a scholarship that was capable of political criticism. It is clear that the latter existed only in the work of a few courageous individuals who risked severe sanctions at the hands of the regime. Such work was carried out by a few clandestine circles, and otherwise a kind of "inner emigration" took place.

20 Letter from Hartung to Röhrig (26 March 1946) in the Nachlass Hartung, Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz Berlin, Box 59.
22 Staatsarchiv Hamburg, Nachlass P.E. Schramm, I. 304, vol. 1. Schramm, a specialist on medieval coronations, was visiting England on the occasion of the coronation festivities in honor of King George VI. The following year he wrote a letter to the English archbishop, Cosmo Lang, voicing his criticism of the Munich accords. The letter, which Lang passed along to Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, was cited by Chamberlain in a speech to the House of Commons. In 1948 this letter, which Hans Rothfels had procured, was submitted to the British military government as exonerating evidence in Schramm's de-nazification hearing. Ibid., vol. 3:404ff.
For obvious reasons, those historians forced to emigrate debated at length the significance of 1933 for the course of modern German historical scholarship. For example, Arthur Rosenberg's diagnosis explained 1933 as the product of a "dual crisis." The first occurred in 1933 when the historical discipline was brought into line with National Socialism, but this was only the visible crisis. The chronic crisis, which Rosenberg deemed "much more interesting and important from an objective point of view," had afflicted German historical scholarship since 1871. 25 For Rosenberg, the acute crisis of 1933 signified the ultimate stage of the chronic malady of historical research in Germany.

II

The second part of this essay addresses several questions concerning the development of German historical scholarship after 1945. In what way did the discipline respond to the final catastrophe of 1945? Did historians develop any new ideas about the future, and to what extent did they see a need for a "revision of German history"? I would also like to consider the personal and political impact of the denazification process on the historical profession. I will then conclude by returning to a question I touched on at the beginning of this essay — the genesis of so-called "modern German social history."

The historian Rudolf Stadelmann of the University of Tübingen opened his lecture in the first postwar semester of 1945-46 with the confession that "we all have lost our way in a dark forest, partly because of our insolence and impatience, partly through our panic and lack of self-discipline." He proceeded to look for the "junction" of German history "where it began to err from its path." 26 This was the central question for most historians in the early postwar period, and the most common answer pointed to what Gerhard Ritter called "the excessive cult of political power." It seemed to Ritter — the devout Protestant — that German intellectuals had "revealed in an almost heathen sense in Machiavellian ideas," and this for him was the root of all evil in German history. 27

25 Ibid
28 So Gerd Tellenbach, Die deutsche Not als Schuld und Schicksal (Stuttgart, 1947), 46.
29 Karl Dietrich Erdmann, in Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht 2 (1951), 211.
the Prussian soldier kings, or the defeat of the bourgeois revolution of 1848,\textsuperscript{30} waned as the new Germany emerged from the catastrophe. Instead, a new variant of historical interpretation now became dominant. This approach retained the traditional orientation toward political history, but rejected Nazi ideas of history and showed little interest in a revival of German military power. This new attitude deserves our attention, especially if we compare it with the statements of the majority of the German historians after the First World War. The Freiburg historian Gerhard Ritter was an exponent of this view, and it was clear from his election in 1949 as the first chairman of the West German historical association that his views were representative of most of the profession. Even Franz Schnabel, a critic of Ritter's interpretation of modern German history, admitted to a critical interest in a revival of German military power. This new attitude operated with vague concepts like “the political” or “the demonic nature or power.” It is revealing that the debates over the policies and significance of Bismarck revived traditional nineteenth-century patterns of argument – Protestant vs. Catholic or centralist vs. federalist. In this regard it can easily be imagined that the sympathetic characterization of Bismarck presented in 1949 by the emigré historian Hans Rothfels at the West German historical conference in Munich was received with relief, and left the calming impression that German historians now could feel rehabilitated.\textsuperscript{32} In the opposing camp were the traditional Catholic and federalist circles in southern and southwestern Germany. Franz Schnabel was their natural spokesman, since he had dared to attack the orthodox interpretation of Bismarck in a speech given to the French-sponsored Rencontres internationales at Speyer in 1949.\textsuperscript{33} Their non-Prussian, federalist view of German history met with the approval of the French occupation authorities. Another group of historians, quite numerous at the time, were representatives of an Occidental-Christian view of history; they also relied on French support, although they had not yet come to

31 Tellenbach, Die deutsche Not, 52.
realize the difference between their own historical approach and the Western European, democratic orientation of postwar French historical scholarship.

At any rate, the non-Prussian, federalist approach found an institutional home in 1950, when the French authorities founded the Institute for European History in Mainz. From 1956 on it received financial support from the federal states to help it with its task of "historical revision" and "decontamination" of schoolbooks. Only here, for political reasons, was the idea of a "revision of history" able to survive in the political language of the Federal Republic. The founding of the institute was in accordance with the "esprit de Spire," that is, it was partly the fruit of joint meetings between French and West German historians at Speyer from 1947 to 1949. In the eyes of historians from the Protestant-Prussian camp, Mainz remained the institute for "enemies of the empire" (Reichsfelder). 34

Later on, the controversy between Ludwig Dehio and Gerhard Ritter over the problem of militarism and even the debate surrounding Fritz Fischer's theses concerning German war aims in the First World War remained focused on the political dimension of history. The discussion of continuities in German history took up the earlier debate on Germany's "errant path," but without any significant attention to social-historical issues. Typical of this approach were Ludwig Dehio's critique of the modern European "age of the masses," and Gerhard Ritter's skeptical attitude toward mass democracy and the function of political parties as a self-organizing principle of democratic societies. Against this historiographical background, the founding of the Commission for the History of Parliamentarianism and Political Parties by Fritz Fischer and Alfred Milatz in 1952 was an important step in a new direction – although Gerhard Ritter, the leading representative of the old guard, remained deeply suspicious of its work.

It is worth mentioning that Ludwig Dehio, the first postwar editor of the Historische Zeitschrift, resisted the tendency toward restoration that would soon set in after 1945. The fact that the HZ did not resume publication until 1949 had partly to do with Dehio's belief that the kind of historiographical revamping that was necessary for the journal had not been possible in the conditions of the immediate postwar years. In a letter to the publisher in 1947, he had contended that "in the light of the events that have revolutionized the world, we should not appear before the public with a random choice of older articles. Instead, we should concentrate on publishing a series of pioneering contributions that address the issues of the day." But Dehio's brave attempt to create a profoundly new concept for the Historische Zeitschrift was doomed to failure, and the publishers returned to the traditional triad of ancient, medieval, and modern history as the basic categories of organization. Dehio hesitated in yielding to what Hermann Heimpel called the "overwhelming drive to normalcy." Dehio wanted the journal to begin with a thorough analysis of the "catastrophe," and only then resume the routine of historical research. In a preface suppressed by the publishers, he admitted the impact of National Socialism on the Historische Zeitschrift and referred to the "atrophy of our discipline." No such statements could be heard from Gerhard Ritter in his introductory speech to the 1949 conference of German historians in Munich.

In this context we have to ask whether there could have been any alternative to restoration, which brings us to the denazification process. Denazification had been a matter of concern to those historians, such as Peter Rassow, who feared that the new historical association created after 1945 might be forced to admit members who had not yet passed this process. He predicted that "given the dubious effectiveness of the [denazification] procedure," one was certain to find "dubious individuals in our association." Herbert Grundmann responded to these doubts by pointing out that the association had agreed to admit only those colleagues who had already received permission to teach and publish again. The problem became even more explosive when French historians demanded that only "men of an immaculate past" (d'un passé absolument sans reproche) could be nominated for the German delegation to the International Historical Congress at Paris in 1950. Participation in the Paris congress was a high priority for Gerhard Ritter, who wanted to restore the international reputation of German historical scholarship as soon as possible. He did not want to wait for another eight years, as had been the case after the First World War.

To get at the core of the denazification problem as described by Peter Rassow, one must ask how many historians were dismissed on political grounds immediately after 1945. Here we can put aside the question of their subsequent prospects for reintegration in the postwar years. In a letter to the publisher in 1947, he had contended that "in the light of the events that have revolutionized the world, we should not appear before the public with a random choice of older articles. Instead, we should concentrate on publishing a series of pioneering contributions that address the issues of the day." But Dehio's brave attempt to create a profoundly new concept for the Historische Zeitschrift was doomed to failure, and the publishers returned to the traditional triad of ancient, medieval, and modern history as the basic categories of organization. Dehio hesitated in yielding to what Hermann Heimpel called the "overwhelming drive to normalcy." Dehio wanted the journal to begin with a thorough analysis of the "catastrophe," and only then resume the routine of historical research. In a preface suppressed by the publishers, he admitted the impact of National Socialism on the Historische Zeitschrift and referred to the "atrophy of our discipline." No such statements could be heard from Gerhard Ritter in his introductory speech to the 1949 conference of German historians in Munich.

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profession, which generally depended on various political factors internal to the respective occupation zones. If we subtract the number of those “rechtsdeutsche” historians who taught in Austria and were dismissed after 1945 as “politically incriminated,” such as Adolf Helbok and Helmut Rössler at Innsbruck or Walter Kienast from Graz, then the number of those who lost their positions amounts to twenty-four professors. This rather heterogeneous group of historians included Willy Andreas, Helmut Berve, Erich Botzenhart, Ulrich Crämer, Heinrich Dannenbauer, Eugen Franz, Günther Franz, Werner Freudenstein, Willy Hoppe, Ulrich Kahrstedt, Gerhard Krüger, Erich Maschke, Theodor Mayer, Wilhelm Mommsen, Karl Alexander von Müller, Franz Petri, Walter Platzhoff, Gustav Adolf Rein, Percy Ernst Schramm, Otto Graf zu Stolberg-Wernigerode, Fritz Taeger, Fritz Valjavec, Egon Zechlin, and Ludwig Zimmermann. We must also add to the list those historians who were openly sympathetic to National Socialist ideology, but were dismissed under the regime as a result of internal quarrels. These included Ernst Anrich at Strasbourg (1943) and Otto Westphal at Hamburg (1937).

In general, it is surprising how quickly those historians who had been suspended or definitively dismissed from their positions were reintegrated into the profession. Most historians had a very good chance of reentering the profession once they had undergone “purification,” especially if they had privately or publicly confessed their errors and showed their willingness to work within a democratic system; there was no professional blacklist of discredited colleagues. The investigations of the denazification committees into the attitudes and behavior of German historians often brought to light a strange mixture of individual decency and political short-sightedness. In those circumstances it was not an easy task to distinguish between the “heroes and the villains,” as Hermann Heimpel wrote to Gerhard Ritter in May of 1949. His judgment was confirmed by the contradictory results of the denazification hearings, which were hardly conducive to an early discussion of German historical scholarship under the Nazis. Few statements by historians were as bold as those of the new rector at Heidelberg, the professor of medicine Karl-Heinz Bauer, who in a letter to Karl Jaspers in 1945 characterized the situation at German universities as “revolutionary.” Bauer declared that “the university should not shrink from casting contempt on what has caused disgrace and destruction. National Socialism is dead, but it has to be pronounced dead.” But such polemics were not quite to the taste of the majority of professors; “discretion” was the watchword of those years.

Some historians who had been discredited because of their activities under the National Socialist regime apologized to colleagues whom they had attacked and denounced. A former student admitted in a letter to Hans Rothfels that he was aware of his own “confusion and errors” in the past. Karl Alexander von Müller, whom the Nazis had appointed editor of Historische Zeitschrift, made a rather feeble apology for his past “errors” in a short biography of Paul Nikolas Cossmann, a Jewish writer whom he had held in high esteem and who had died in Theresienstadt. Müller’s article appeared in the Catholic periodical Hochland, and while it implied a vague confession of guilt, its characterization of Theresienstadt as the “comparatively best concentration camp” is as repellent as it is revealing. Heinrich Ritter von Srbik made a similarly ambiguous “apology” to Hans Rothfels, but as Walter Goetz’s gentle reply to a colleague repentant of his earlier personal attacks shows, there was a willingness to forgive. Only those historians who remained unrepentant were excluded from the general amnesty of the profession. One such scholar was Otto Westphal, who in 1953 went so far as to claim that since an objective analysis of National Socialism required a reconstruction of its historical genealogy, ex-Nazis were an indispensable resource. The Hamburg historian Gustav A. Rein argued that the majority of his colleagues were in league with the allies, and he accused them of outright “falsification of history.”

The numerous postwar committees of denazification, “purification,” or simply reorganization of the universities tried to persuade the allies that party membership in itself was an unreliable criterion of judgment. These committees were partly staffed with university teachers who knew well enough – and sometimes even from their own experience – that their colleagues had sometimes been forced to pay lip-service to Nazi ideology or join the party in order to continue their academic work. Hence the “Cologne Regulations,” for example, demanded the dismissal of university faculty only if they had held an important office in the party, or if full professors (Ordinarien) had joined the party of their own free will; if they had been forced to do so or could give proof of an oppositional attitude

toward the party, they were excepted from this rule. Immediately after the war, Peter Rassow had already pointed to the difficulty of distinguishing between formal party status and genuine National Socialist conviction as the central problem of denazification at German universities.

III

One may conclude from this survey that continuity and the return to “normalcy” were the basic tendencies of the postwar period. Yet despite the persistence of traditional patterns of argument (for example, in the Bismarck debate), historical scholarship in the Federal Republic did move — however haltingly — toward a new, methodologically self-conscious approach to society. As mentioned earlier, the concept of Volkstum in the Weimar and National Socialist era had served as the starting-point for such an approach, although movements like “German sociology,” Kulturaumforschung, or regional history (Landesgeschichte) never succeeded in developing a clear conception of society. Between 1930 and 1945, “new” history meant exactly this folkish orientation; to be an open-minded and engaged historian meant addressing völkische topics and questions. National Socialism not only brought about the delayed “social revolution” that Ralf Dahrendorf, David Schoenbaum, and others have described; the experience of enforced change gave birth to a qualitatively new idea of society that differed fundamentally from the older conceptions of Ritter and Meinecke, for whom modern society was nothing more than “the rise of the masses” (Vermassung).

We have already seen that there was no radical purge of the profession after 1945, and that any reorientation toward cultural history was rejected as an “escape from responsibility,” as Hermann Heimpel put it. Ludwig Dehio pleaded on behalf of the “scientific vernacular” of German historians, and this vernacular was political history. Given the difficulties of scholarly contact and exchange after the war, met hodological and substantive innovations could only emanate from the historical scholarship of the Weimar and Nazi periods. Building on this scholarship, a number of postwar historians denazified the concept of the Volk and at the same time took the first step in the direction of a new “social history.” The process of conceptual denazification was initiated at the first meeting of Werner Conze’s Arbeitskreis für moderne Sozialgeschichte, the circle of historians mentioned at the beginning of this essay. This group consisted primarily of historians whose work had been concerned with the disintegration of preindustrial society. These historians focused on the preconditions and consequences of the structural changes that had transformed the rural world from the late-eighteenth century onward. They gained particular insight into the social dimension of this transformation, and their concern with elucidating the respective structures of rural and industrial societies was in line with the call for a fundamentally new historical method (Historik) that Conze had been voicing rather covertly since the mid-1950s.

In this context it is useful to look more closely at the connections among the historians who worked in this field. Freyer and Ipsen had cooperated since their years at Leipzig. Conze was strongly influenced by Ipsen, and his acquaintance with Otto Brunner, whom he had come to know while completing his Habilitation in Vienna, reinforced this orientation. In the light of these connections, we have to reconsider Freyer’s addresses to the historians’ conferences in 1951 and again in 1956 at Ulm, where he could feel as a persona gratissima. There Freyer made an important contribution to the discussion with his lecture, “The Social Whole (das soziale Ganze) and the Freedom of the Individual Under the Conditions of the Industrial Age.” We must keep in mind that Freyer in 1935 had declared in connection with his program for a “German Sociology” that the conflict between state and society had been reconciled — that is, it had dissolved into the new concept of the Volk. In his later lectures in the 1950s, his concept of “mature industrial society” now replaced that of the Volk as the resolution of the state-society disjunction.

Conze’s programmatic essay of 1957, prepared before the Bad Ems conference, was informed throughout by Freyer’s new perspectives on industrial society. Freyer’s postulation of a Zeitschwelle at about

38 Cf. Jerry Z. Muller, The Other God That Failed: Hans Freyer and the Deradicalization of German Conservatism (Princeton, 1987), 357. This study demonstrates Freyer’s importance for the emergence of social history in the 1950s.
1800, a kind of historical “turn of the tide,” as well as his notion of the “double revolution” in England and France, also influenced Conze. Already in 1949, Conze had written an enthusiastic review of Freyer’s World History of Europe. Conze praised the “clarity of his concepts” and Freyer’s “vivid understanding of the diversity of the historical dimension.” To him, Freyer’s opus represented the “high-point” of “the new historical consciousness that has been articulated in Germany since 1945.” Also deserving of mention was the call for a “history of concepts” (Begriffsgeschichte) that would focus on the period from 1750 to 1850. Begriffsgeschichte had been a subject of discussion at the first meeting of the Arbeitskreis für moderne Sozialgeschichte in 1957. This approach had arisen out of Otto Brunner’s critique—already formulated in his Land and Lordship (1st ed. 1939)—of the modern terminology employed by jurists and historians to describe late-medieval and early-modern historical reality.

Hence Conze’s early attempts to develop a conception of social and structural history, influenced as they were by the earlier work of Freyer and Brunner, owed much to historical perspectives developed prior to 1945. Noting the continuity between prewar and postwar German-language scholarship, Conze later wrote that the “shock of 1945” had not, on the whole, brought “a fresh start or caesura”; to the contrary, it had “confirmed and strengthened the trend toward a new orientation that was already at work.” I find no reason to dispute the judgment of this important witness.39

When I started writing this essay, I was still influenced by research on my book about the history of 14 July 1789 and its legacy in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Soon I began to recognize a link between that subject and the development of German historical scholarship, since the evaluation of the French Revolution by German historians tended to reflect their general attitude toward Western Europe and its “alien” political culture. Therefore I would like to conclude with an observation concerning the changing perceptions of the French Revolution after 1945, which can shed light on the conclusions that German historians drew from the experience of National Socialism.

It is well known that German historians had included the French Revolution in their general condemnation of Western–European, Anglo–Saxon political culture. Hearkening back to the “ideas of 1914,” Joseph Goebbels had declared in 1933 that he was determined to extinguish the “ideas of 1789.”40 Already under the National Socialist regime, and again after the catastrophe of 1945, German historians began to discover the structural links between the French Revolution and the course of modern German history, especially with regard to the National Socialist era. One example was Gerhard Ritter and Ludwig Dehio, who for all their differences agreed that the roots of totalitarianism lay in the spirit of the French Revolution. 41

The thesis that the National Socialists were in some way the spiritual descendents of the French Jacobins was greeted with enthusiasm by journalistic commentators, as it seemed to exonerate the Germans from historical guilt. For that reason it was attacked by foreign critics, but one of Dehio’s reviewers could still claim that Dehio had “for the first time in a ‘scientific’ historical article described the Nazis as the German Jacobins. It is extremely important that this thesis . . . should be adopted by historiography. It elevates our tragic fate from its isolation and locates it within the framework of the larger European tragedy.”42 Here, paradoxically, the experience of National Socialism had led Germans to recognize themselves as a part of West-

39 Werner Conze, “Mein Weg zur Sozialgeschichte nach 1945,” in Forschung in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Beispiele, Kritik, Vorschläge, ed. Christian Schneider (Weinheim, 1983), p. 78. I find it surprising that in his introduction to Europäischer Adel 1750–1950, ed. Hans-Ulrich Wehler (Göttingen, 1990), 13, n. 5, Wehler now maintains that historians have long been aware of this strand of continuity in modern German social history. For this assertion is contradicted by his own account of the genesis of social history outlined in Wehler’s earlier writings. See, for example, his introduction to Moderne deutsche Sozialgeschichte n. 3 above, 12. The essays in the same volume by Conze and Hans Mommsen do not go into this tradition of social history either, and it is acknowledged only implicitly and without further comment in the article by Hans Linde, a student of Freyer. Similarly, Jürgen Kocka’s Sozialgeschichte—Begriff—Entwicklung—Probleme (Göttingen, 1977), 67ff., does not appear to be aware of this tradition; it is referred to briefly by Gerhard A. Ritter, in Sozialgeschichte im internationalen Überblick, ed. Jürgen Kocka (Darmstadt, 1989), 29, but without going any further into the connections between the historiography of the 1930s and that of the 1990s. I confess that it was Wehler’s rather confusing introduction to his Moderne Sozialgeschichte that led me to look more closely at the historiographical significance of the 1950s. Otherwise, it was by no means my intent to argue that West German social history—“one-sidedly and stubbornly,” as Wehler put it—arose solely out of the tradition of Freyer, Conze, and Brunner. I am fully aware of the theoretical advances of the late 1960s and 1970s, and my Deutsche Geschichtswissenschaft (n. 1 above), 306, refers to the contributions of other scholars (for example, Otto Hintze, Eckart Kehr, and Hans Rosenberg) to the development of German social history.


42 Emil Franzel, in Neues Abendland 5 (1950), 246.
ern European political culture. This recognition represents the begin-
ning of a relativist tendency in German historiography that on the one hand destroyed the long prevailing thesis of German excep-
tionalism, but on the other hand assigned the responsibility for Na-
tional Socialism to forces outside Germany, such as the crisis of Eu-
era. This seems to offer further confirmation for the view that the dominant issues in postwar German historiography were already present in the late 1940s and early 1950s – something worth considering when trying to understand the historiographical debates of the present.

Comment: German Historiography

GEORG G. IGGERS

I very much agree with Professor Schulze on two key themes in his essay – his portrayal of the continuity of conservative political attitudes in the German historical profession in West Germany after 1945 and his emphasizing that the new social history of the Conze Arbeitskreis was not a break with historiographical practices of the past but had its roots in the völkisch-oriented history and sociology of the Weimar Republic and the Nazi period, represented from somewhat different perspectives by Günther Ipsen and Hans Freyer, which went beyond the narrowly political focus of the mainstream of academic historians to a comprehensive, interdisciplinary approach to the history of the broader society. Yet on one very important point, I believe Professor Schulze’s discussion of the origins of social history, which plays such an important role after 1960, is incomplete. The new social history received important impulses not only from the organicist conception of a national consensus on the part of Ipsen and Freyer, who before and during the Nazi regime had propagated a racial interpretation of history, but also from historians and social scientists who had been forcibly removed from the German universities in 1933 but began to play an important role in the formation of social history in Germany after the 1950s.

The continuity in the political climate in Germany after 1945 cannot be stressed enough, and it is to Professor Schulze’s credit that he has thoroughly documented it. It is important that the people who played a decisive role in the German historical profession, like Gerhard Ritter, Hans Rothfels, or Hans Herzfeld, had not been Nazis; Rothfels and Herzfeld had been victims of racial persecution, Ritter had been arrested because of his connections with the Goerdeler circle. Yet they had been thoroughgoing conservatives and nationalists. The case of Ritter is particularly important because he