

Preface

It is a challenge to write about German history. Probably no other people has been at times so much admired and at other times so much loathed as the German people. They have endured crisis, tragedy, and catastrophe but have always displayed the tenacity to recover, never more spectacularly than at the present time. When weak they have been the hapless prey of their neighbors; when strong they have often with nauseous arrogance tried to dominate and subjugate those neighbors. A talented and complex people, they have produced men with the lofty grandeur of Johann Sebastian Bach, Immanuel Kant, and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe; they have also produced men with the diabolic venom of Paul Josef Goebbels and Heinrich Himmler. When divided they have sought unity, but when united they have tended to split into their constituent parts. Although an integral part of Western culture, they have at times forsworn and challenged that culture; the challenge has been supported with such power that the West has been hard pressed to subdue it. Germany has been at different moments a threat, a friend, and even an ally. She has never been negligible.

I have tried to write a convenient, manageable, and succinct history of Germany with stress on the last century, and have attempted to make the complexities of German development as understandable as possible.

This book is directed at a varied assortment of readers. I hope that the general educated public, concerned about the state of the world, will discover in this work how one of the important components of the world developed as it did; that the undergraduate student can use it not too unpalatably as a text or as supplementary reading; that it will be helpful to the teacher as the source of lecture material or for explanations of troublesome points; and that the graduate student will find the text useful for the running thread of German history, and the Suggested Readings a competent steppingstone to research.

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This is not a scholar's book, though I trust it is a scholarly one. I have cut footnotes and scholarly apparatus to the barest minimum and have limited my bibliography to works in the English language which are readily available. Many of these works will easily introduce the student to further reading in other languages, especially, of course, German.

I do not know of any other book on this subject in English that accomplishes exactly the objective I have set for myself. It is in some ways a modest objective, but one for which I have no apology since I do not disdain the use of learning for purposes of communication.

One of the most pleasant aspects of writing a book is the opportunity it affords to thank one's friends for their kindness and gracious help. Had it not been for the generosity and modesty of Mr. James Joll, Fellow of St. Antony's College, Oxford, this book would not exist. My warm friends and fellow historians, Dr. Edwin L. Dunbaugh, Hofstra College, and Dr. Carl E. Schorske, University of California, Berkeley, have each read considerable portions of the manuscript and made valuable suggestions. My stubbornness prevented me from always accepting their advice, so I must accept full responsibility for shortcomings in the following pages. I extend my thanks to Sister Mary Marguerite, O.P., librarian of the Dominican College of San Rafael, and her staff, for many kindnesses. I am grateful also to Mr. Walter W. Corriea for encouragement and help in the tedious work of proof-reading.

The troubled history of Germany has much to teach us. Perhaps this volume will extend the reach of its lessons a little further.