

Winter 12-1-2006

Review: *Deutschland und die USA in der Internationalen Geschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts: Festschrift für Detlef Junker* by Manfred Berg and Philipp Gassert (eds.)

Gerd Horten

Concordia University - Portland, ghorten@cu-portland.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <http://commons.cu-portland.edu/humfacultyresearch>



Part of the [History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Horten, Gerd, "Review: *Deutschland und die USA in der Internationalen Geschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts: Festschrift für Detlef Junker* by Manfred Berg and Philipp Gassert (eds.)" (2006). *Humanities Faculty Articles & Other Works*. 15.
<http://commons.cu-portland.edu/humfacultyresearch/15>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Humanities Department at CU Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Humanities Faculty Articles & Other Works by an authorized administrator of CU Commons. For more information, please contact libraryadmin@cu-portland.edu.

Manfred Berg and Philipp Gassert, eds. *Deutschland und die USA in der Internationalen Geschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts*. Festschrift für Detlef Junker. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2004. 598 pp.

Amidst repeated Euro-bashing in the United States and resurgent Anti-Americanism in much of Europe, this book is published at a very opportune time. Like the academic, scholar, and entrepreneur to whom it is dedicated, this anthology of essays provides a soothing balm to the raw nerves displayed on both sides of the Atlantic over the recent years. And much like Detlef Junker, who has worked unceasingly over the last four decades to both investigate and strengthen the strands that bind the United States and Germany together, these essays as well carefully trace and critically analyze the complex relationship between these two countries within the larger international context of the 20th century in a constructive as well as illuminating manner.

Manfred Berg and Philipp Gassert have to be congratulated on the edition of this wonderfully rich collection of essays. Not only have they drawn together many of the significant luminaries in the field of German-American relations, but they also have assembled these essays in a way to create a continuous flow of intriguing and revealing studies from the early 20th century to the issues of our times. Mirroring the interests of Detlef Junker himself, the anthology focuses on studies of German-American relations, essays on American history, and explorations of theoretical and historiographical questions.

It's important to state my greatest regret of this review from the outset: there is simply no way to do justice to the nearly thirty articles published in this volume. Even the first section, "Zu Theorie und Methode der internationalen Geschichte," which contains five essays and is one of the shortest sections in the anthology, is an excellent case in point. Most of these essays are wrestling with the tremendously important implications of globalization for modern historical scholarship and call for an expanded, more global, approach to historical studies which takes into consideration the increasing networks of relationships as well as "the mutual penetration beyond regions and countries," (32) as Akira Iriye puts it. Whether the levels of analysis be national, international, and global history (Iriye) or the approach move from a transnational to international and finally to world history, as Kirian Klaus Patel suggests in his article, the call for an expanded historical perspective is as unanimous as the demand to draw clearer distinctions between these levels of analysis.

Another preoccupation of these theoretical essays is the scholarly innovations of the "cultural turn" and the legacies of this research especially for the field of diplomatic history. Both authors who focus on this question (Frank Ninkovich and Jessica C.E. Gienow-Hecht) emphasize the rift that this approach has caused among historians of foreign relations and

international history. As Ninkovich points out, more traditional historians focused on the study of power relationships often belittle the cultural turn, especially the sometimes unquestioned assumptions among cultural historians that culture equals power. (69) At the same time, he emphasizes that the increased, multi-dimensional process of globalization forces these estranged camps to work in ever closer collaboration to yield rich, multi-layered results: “Es gibt keinen Königsweg zur Erkenntnis mehr, nur viele Wege.” (79) Gienow-Hecht is even more ebullient in her evaluation of the cultural turn. After recapping the turn in several countries, especially the United States, England, France and Germany, she asserts the effectiveness and productivity of the new approach. Like Ninkovich, she stresses the fact that artificial and fossilized demarcations are slowly overcome. In addition, she welcomes the expansion to less traditional fields of study, such as the peace movement, ecological degradation and cultural conflicts, as particularly fruitful.

The second section of the anthology focuses on American history. In general, it is weaker compared with the high caliber of overall compilation of essays. However, there are at least two notable exceptions in this section that caught my attention. Knud Krakau’s essay thoughtfully chronicles the emergence of a new, dominant *bellum iustum* argument in recent American history. Unlike the earlier version of *bellum iustum*, which insisted on collected self-defense for justifying war, the new, American version has unilaterally revised this approach. As he highlights, the United States has increasingly elevated democracy, freedom and human rights as justified causes for war since 1945, illustrated particularly clearly in the war against Iraq. Since these *bellum iustum* arguments are based on an internal value system not shared by yet applied to the outside world, it is unlikely to increase international security. In fact, Krakau rightly argues that this represents a return to an older system of dominant power politics: “Ubiquitous unilateralism is no substitute for (an international security system).” (155)

The second article in this section that merits particular attention is Manfred Berg’s insightful analysis of American race relations in the context of 20th century international relations. He subdivides the century into roughly three eras. In the first half of the 20th century, the supremacy of the white race was assumed not only in the US but in much of Europe as well. Powerful and persistent minority voices notwithstanding, there was surprisingly little recognition of the contradictions between calls for freedom and democracy, on the one hand, and internal discrimination, on the other. World War II and the early Cold War significantly complicated the continuation of racism and black activists were increasingly successful in highlighting the paradox. The birth of the civil rights movement and its struggle against ingrained racism and prejudice embodied the second broad era in Berg’s overview. As he rightly points out, their fight was aided by the increasing liability of black discrimination on Cold War politics; a full eighty

percent of Americans, for example, expected serious damage to the American reputation in 1963 because of its racist policies. (191) In the last era, post-1970s, race relations have largely disappeared as a dimension of international relations, as the author suggests. At the same time, Berg would probably not disagree with the assessment that the continued presence of racial prejudice in the United States, as evidenced in the LA riots and more recently Hurricane Katrina, at least provide powerful echoes of past liabilities in this area.

The third section of the anthology, entitled “Deutschland und die USA bis 1945,” contains nine essays on a wide-ranging number of topics. While some of the articles stick to more traditional political topics, such as Lloyd Ambrosius’ comparison of Woodrow Wilson’s and Franklin D. Roosevelt’s visions of self-determination and world peace, others, like Anja Schüler’s exploration of the women’s peace movement during World War I or Reinhard Doerries’ intriguing investigation of the activities of the German intelligence units in the United States during the first half of the century, focus on more overlooked and generally less familiar topics.

Part of this third section as well is Micheal Wala’s insightful overview of the academic exchange programs between the United States and Germany in the interwar period. As he emphasizes, Germans struggled to reestablish the programs that had been in place prior to World War I. However, they were never able to attract the high number of American students which had flocked to German universities in the pre-war period. (311) If anything, the scales had tipped in the opposite direction, and especially German students took advantage of the programs and praised the more informal and open habitus between professors and students or employers and employees. As Wala highlights, this democratization of personal relations, even long after the fact, was one of the most striking long-term memories that German students took away from these experiences. Philipp Gassert’s fascinating article explores the status of US companies in Germany during the Nazi era. He focuses specifically on two car manufacturers, Ford and General Motors (Opel), and highlights their limited control over their German operations after World War II began. Executives of both companies, for example, had strictly prohibited the production of military vehicles and were able to enforce this policy up to 1939. After the start of the war, however, as Gassert emphasizes, both companies switched to military production and were led by an all-German team of managers which often had little consultation with the US headquarters of Ford and GM. (349) At the same time, repeated threats of confiscation by the German government did not materialize. While there were several attempts of such a take-over of American companies after the United States’ entry into the war, it ultimately failed due to

internal bickering among German agencies and lack of clear policy guidelines from Hitler and his inner circle.

The limits of a review like this really become apparent when confronted with the last part of the collection of essays (“Transatlantische Beziehungen seit 1945”). It encompasses eleven articles, most of them absolutely outstanding pieces of scholarship written by some of the most prominent scholars in the field of international and German-American relations. It is no exaggeration to say that this section could have been a book by itself. Several of the articles in this section focus on the integration of West Germany in a western, transatlantic alliance during the early Cold War years. Wilfried Mausbach chooses the venue of imagined communities to trace the subtle integration of West Germany into successive and overlapping master narratives of “Abendland,” “der Westen” und “der freie Westen.” He closes by speculating whether the “free west” is currently at another juncture based on increasing discussion of the emergence of an “Anglosphere,” which emphasizes a more limited version of transatlantic collaboration. (446-47)

Volker Berghahn’s adds a fascinating challenge in his article on Shepard Stone, in which he makes a strong case for studying second-rung elites and their influence on international relations based on the network theories developed in sociology. In this vein, Shepard Stone provides an exemplary case study. He was an American born in New Hampshire and received his doctoral degree from the Berlin Historical Seminar in 1933. For most of the 1930s, he worked for the *New York Times* and was recruited as a communications expert during World War II. After the war, he worked as the director of American public relations in West Germany and became an indefatigable networker (“Netzwerkspezialist”) for German and American journalists and professors. (414) He was driven by the conviction that informal, interpersonal contacts provided the best route for increased German-American understanding and constantly hosted receptions and parties that facilitated these relationships. Steadily and consistently, Stone build on these contacts and credentials as trustee of the Ford Foundation (1952), director of the International Affairs Program (1955) and the International Association for Cultural Freedom (1960s), and finally took over the leadership of the newly created Berlin Aspen-Institut (1970s). As Berghahn convincingly emphasizes, expanded research of these international networks and networkers will yield both new insights and a deeper understanding of international history, including German-American relations.

Several articles also focus on the complex decades of the 1960s and 1970s, when West Germany was both experiencing increased “Americanization” as well as was beginning to pursue a more autonomous course. In his revisionist article on market and advertising research, Clemens

Zimmermann, for example, contends that the accelerated adoption of American culture and consumption was far more typical after the mid-1960s than during the earlier decades, at least in the case of advertising. Conversely, Gottfried Niedhart demonstrates convincingly that the West German “Ostpolitik” of the late 1960s and early 1970s had to be pursued in the face of an ambivalent and, at times suspicious, American ally. What made this policy controversial were not just fears about West Germany’s true intentions but also the fact that Bonn was stealing some of Kissinger’s thunder by putting itself “in the vanguard of the western policy of détente.” (515)

The last set of essays in this section deals with very current controversies and concerns. Alan Steinweis explores a specific aspect of the debate of the Americanization of the Holocaust by highlighting its frequent invocation on the part of American politicians to influence foreign relations decision from Kosovo to the war in Iraq. Klaus Larres counters recent claims that strong US-German relations have become irrevocably altered and frayed by recent controversies. He finds fault in overly confrontational postures on both sides of the Atlantic and remains hopeful of a rapprochement between the United States and Germany. He predicts that both will find the need for and rewards of close collaboration overwhelming. Konrad Jarausch, finally, takes the German university system to task in his insightful comparison of the US and German college systems. He believes that the time has come for the careful study and selective adoption of the American university model. Germany, he contends, has never fully acknowledged the transformation of its universities from elite to mass institutions, and he sees the introduction of a shorter basic studies degree and a clearer differentiation between undergraduate and graduate studies as the first essential steps in this direction. (581-82)

As my review has highlighted, the sheer volume, variety and quality of the essays in this edition is dazzling, and the editors deserve the highest praise for this rich and inspiring anthology. If I have one caveat, it is that this collection of essays probably could have been pared back slightly. This is not to take away from the fact, however, that this anthology of essays presents a wonderfully broad and stimulating addition to the scholarship of 20th century international relations and properly honors Detlef Junker who has so significantly contributed to this field through scholarship, teaching and institutional leadership.

Gerd Horten
Concordia University
Portland, Oregon