Reshaping Capitalism in Weimar and Nazi Germany ed. by Moritz Föllmer and Pamela E. Swett (review)

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Reshaping Capitalism in Weimar and Nazi Germany. Edited by Moritz Föllmer and Pamela E. Swett. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022. Pp. 316. Cloth $107.87. ISBN 9781108833547.

How capitalistic were the Nazis? Interwar fascists often claimed to be pioneering a third way between a Soviet-style planned economy and Anglo-American liberal capitalism, but that rhetoric scarcely translated into economic reality. Frankfurt School theorists framed Nazism as a kind of crisis capitalism, and several notable Marxist historians controversially blamed the leaders of German big business for the Nazis' rise to power. After years of strident debate around this cluster of issues, the field has reached a sort of consensus that the Nazi regime did not depart significantly from capitalist principles or economic liberalism—at least for those included in the *Volksgemeinschaft* (national community), even as the state intervened to dictate production priorities, expropriate Jewish-owned assets, and fully exploit an unfree labor pool. But how does the Nazi economy fit into broader histories of economic thought and twentieth-century capitalism? And how unique was the German case in a century marked—as historians Konrad Jarausch and Michael Geyer observed in their 2009 book *Shattered Past*—by periodic and drastic swings between hunger and affluence?

These and related questions have produced a sizable historical literature, one that has grown with particular intensity since the 2008 crash and the increased scholarly interest in capitalism, its histories, and its global dimensions. What has received insufficient and unsatisfactory historiographic attention until recently, as the editors of this rich and nuanced volume argue in their comprehensive introduction, are the cultural dimensions of capitalism and the interactions between culture and economy in Germany in the first half of the twentieth century. Föllmer and Swett use this lens to explore capitalism and its cultural resonances from a variety of angles, emphasizing such key issues as continuities between the Weimar and the Nazi periods, the place of the Jews in German discourses on capitalism, tensions between state control and market freedom, and the persistent sense of crisis that pervaded discourses around capitalism from the early twentieth century on.

The volume's eleven essays bring together recent and current scholarship on a range of topics at the seams of cultural, economic, and business history, and the most successful ones illustrate the (often surprising) symbioses of Nazi ideologies and capitalist practices and the long-term consequences of those interactions. The chapters in part one revolve around *Kapitalismuskritik* (critical perspectives on capitalism) in the period following World War I, a time when capitalism itself was a question, and indeed when the state had begun to play a pronounced role in German economic life. In these years, thinkers across the political spectrum debated the relationship between state power, industry, and the market, searching for ways to tame capitalism's powers and harness them for the national good. Each essay in this section shows

how Nazi ideas and antisemitic constructions infused German economic ideas well before 1933, producing a kind of authoritarian capitalism (Martin Geyer) that was coded as "productive" and community-oriented as opposed to the alleged greed and rapaciousness of "Jewish capitalism."

Part two provocatively introduces secrecy as a category of analysis, shedding light on the concealment of wealth and hidden capitalist activity from a transnational perspective. In essays on the Thyssen family, German and American entrepreneurs Friedrich Flick and Henry J. Kaiser, respectively, and Hamburg's coffee industry, the authors show the discursive and narrative construction of capitalist success and the silencing and erasing of problematic pasts after 1945.

The chapters in part three move from coffee to beer and use advertising, public relations, and Germany's *Tumultgesetz* (tumult law, or property damage guarantees) to explore ways in which businesses promoted themselves and their products as vital to the citizenry and the state. Here, we are introduced to Weimar- and Nazi-era consumers and conflicting ideas of the market as both a rational machine and a mercurial arena demanding fine-tuned psychological approaches and artistic nuance (Jan Logemann).

The two contributions to part four turn to the banking sector and foreground antisemitism and discourses about Jews in analyses of savings banks as employers and businesses in the Weimar and Nazi periods and in the dynamics of the Reich's settlement policies in the so-called Wartheland. Alexa Stiller's final essay innovatively draws on Cedric Robinson's concept of "racial capitalism" and structural racism to illuminate the intertwining of race (antisemitism in this case) and economy in the Nazi settler colonial project, a fitting conclusion to a volume that shows throughout how capitalism's negative dimensions were projected onto the Jewish other and that the conflicts and debates around German capitalism from the early twentieth century on actually found a kind of resolution in National Socialism. Significantly, several of the essays follow their protagonists into emigration and exile and move into the postwar period, addressing the continuities between Nazi and West German business and the manifold entanglements of capitalism and complicity.

Although the chapters vary substantially in style and focus, most manage to hew closely to the volume's central themes, a significant achievement in a volume of this scope. Taken together, they provide fresh approaches and much-needed nuance to these challenging and fraught topics. The analytical focus is tight, but the significance and implications are broad, making for an immensely satisfying collection. Some consideration of linkages between German industry, economic thought, and the machinery of the Final Solution in addition to more attention to the war's economic dimensions could have given the book even greater resonance. Nevertheless, *Reshaping Capitalism* represents an enormous contribution to the ongoing debates about capitalism, fascism, and twentieth-century trajectories, and it will remain an

essential reference point for scholarship on capitalism in twentieth-century Germany for years to come.

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The People's Dictatorship: A History of Nazi Germany. By Alan E. Steinweis. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023. Pp. 294. Cloth $90.00. ISBN 9781107012363.

When reviewing a new textbook on the Third Reich, one generally looks for three elements: an original narrative, a consideration of central themes and problems, and the incorporation of recent research. Alan Steinweis's well-conceived, fluently-written new history accomplishes these three tasks. By building the narrative around the concept of "people's dictatorship" (akin to Mary Fulbrook's concept of "participatory dictatorship"), Steinweis provides an analytical framework that acknowledges the regime's consensual elements (the Third Reich "revolutionized German society in important respects . . . backed by popular consensus") while reaffirming the fact that the Third Reich, dependent as it was on "a system of coercion and terror," never created "the People's Community envisaged by Nazi true believers" (3). This framework provides ample space for addressing central themes and problems, and the historiographical scaffolding, while modest, is up to date.

The book is organized loosely along chronological and thematic lines. The first three chapters examine the role of ideology and pragmatism, coercion and consent, in consolidating the NSDAP's hold on the state, balancing the distinctive role of Hitler, Nazi ideology, and Nazi propaganda against the socioeconomic and political dislocations of the interwar period. Steinweis does not downplay the revolutionary element in Nazi ideology but notes that it manifested itself unevenly after 1933, producing a Nazi "third way" seeking to "address the challenges posed by modern capitalism by reconfiguring the relationship between state and society" (21). Chapter three examines the period of "coordination" of party and state, which began with a quasi-constitutional alliance of Nazis and nationalist conservatives, and ended with the purge of the party's radical elements and conservative opponents in June 1934, followed by Hitler uniting the office of Chancellor and President in his person, subordinating the military, and designating the SS as the Third Reich's chief policing and terror organization.

The middle three chapters focus on the economy, society, and policing, respectively. The Nazi preoccupation with race, Steinweis argues, "did not rule out the possibility of upward mobility based on natural ability" (78). Nor were workers or women, despite much of the Third Reich's anti-Marxist and chauvinist rhetoric, immune to the benefits of rising employment and excitement around Hitler's foreign