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Panikos Panayi. *Ethnic Minorities in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Germany: Jews, Gypsies, Poles, Turks and Others.* Harlow, England: Longman, 2000. xvi + 288pp. Â£14.99 (paper), ISBN 978-0-582-26771-8.

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Clearing up the Jargon

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The publication of Panikos Panayi's book appears well timed. Even the most superficial observer of Germany cannot overlook the steep rise in racist and lately even antisemitic attacks. At the same time a debate about an immigration law is slowly beginning to take shape. The declining birth-rate and thus the need to prevent the German state-pension system from collapse requires immigration. Even conservative sceptics have called for (limited and controlled) immigration. In 2000 the federal government adopted a Green Card program to bring several thousand young IT-professionals from Eastern Europe and Southeast Asia to Germany.

A survey of minorities and immigrants in Germany which provides a historical background should therefore be welcome. But even before opening the book, readers familiar with German history and ethnic studies may wonder about the implications of the title. Is the term "ethnic minorities" in the German context between 1800 and 2000 really a useful concept for groups as diverse as "Jews, Gypsies, Poles, Turks and Others"?

Panayi has indeed drawn together some hitherto scattered facts on a wide range of groups in one volume, ranging from Turks in contemporary Germany to the Sorbs in East Germany, and to various other groups throughout modern German history. The volume is designed as a textbook written for undergraduate students and beginners in the field. It is organized in seven chapters: In the first chapter entitled "Majorities and Minorities in German History," Panayi tries to define some terms, as he puts it "to clear up the jargon" (p. 2), also providing a superficial sketch of premodern German history. The six following chapters on the status of ethnic minorities follow modern German history in the traditional chronological order, beginning with the period before 1871, followed by Imperial Germany, the Weimar Republic, The Third Reich, and the two German states between 1949 and 1989. The last chapter deals with Germany after 1989. Panayi's argument is not surprising. He detects a continuity in German history of the state refusing to accept "ethnic minorities" and, for that matter, immigration as such.

The challenge in writing such a book is to understand and weave together two rather complex processes, modern German history and the history of minorities in Germany. Panikos Panayi should be praised for his effort, and he claims at least three times that he is indeed the first scholar to have done so (pp. x, 1, 272). But unfortunately the book has a number of serious flaws, especially on the conceptual level, which undermine the project from the outset.

1. The refusal of the author to discuss the validity and applicability of complex terms such as "ethnic minority," ethnicity, assimilation etc. He brushes aside what he calls "jargon" (p. 2) in a few pages (p. 2-9) in his introductory chapter. Page 2-8 are devoted to the terms nationalism and racism. But here Panayi never really defines nationalism. The reader learns that it "may" have existed in medieval Europe, that the Reformation "made a difference" (p. 2), that nationalism is related to a sovereign populace and that it really started with the French Revolution. From there it moved east: "Nationalism infected German-speaking Europe almost instantly and, like a disease, the whole continent had caught it by the end of the nineteenth century." (p. 3) After 1815 the "educated middle classes" used nationalism to "eliminate their rulers" (p. 3). But an undergraduate reader may still wonder what nationalism as such was, let alone why its definition was and is controversial. And Panayi repeats this unsatisfactory approach for the term racism: The philosopher Immanuel Kant used the term "race," "there emerged the concept of Social Darwinism" (but from where?), and the Pan-Germans used the concept etc.

The concept of "Begriffsgeschichte" (history of concepts) is completely absent from the whole book, i.e. the Enlightment concept of "race" is not identical with that

of the Pan-German League more than one hundred years later. The term ethnicity receives less than two pages of attention but not really a definition, in a book that is primarily devoted to ethnic groups. Panayi stresses "that no difference exists between an ethnic group and a nation" in the German case, and that members of an ethnic group share appearance, language and religion (p. 8). After page nine, the author never returns to the subject of terms and their validity. Other crucial terms that are used but not explained include "minority," "diaspora," "identity," and "antisemitism";

2. The author takes a simplistic approach to complex topics such as National Socialism, highlighted by short and superficial sentences and paragraphs which were not carefully edited (examples below);

3. The author relies on a very diffuse mix of secondary literature which includes standard references, rather obscure works, outdated studies, and popular histories. Rather than carefully researching the history of a group or a period, the author in many cases appears to use the first book he could find and put it into the footnotes.

In the German case Panayi differentiates between three kinds of "ethnic minorities": Jews and Gypsies as long settled but dispersed minorities; Poles, Danes and other groups as localized minorities; and immigrants. In many works on Imperial Germany, Poles and Danes are referred to as "national" minorities, but this term is not discussed. And there are groups which clearly do not fit into Panayi's tripartite system: Jewish and Gypsy immigrants and Polish immigrants in particular. Panayi also does not explain what he exactly means by "dispersed" as opposed to "localised." Robin Cohen's recent and easily accessible works on this particular subject are not mentioned.[1]

A central problem, however, is the complete absence of a discussion of the validity of the concept "ethnic minority" for each of the groups treated in the book. Especially in the German context this is quite unfortunate. On a theoretical level the concepts ethnicity, ethnic group and assimilation are derived primarily from the American context. But Germany, in particular, does not easily compare with the United States. To this day Germany is officially not an immigration country, Germany has no immigration law, and German citizenship is still largely based on the "ius sanguinis" (law of the blood) rather than "ius solis" (law of the territory) as in the US, and, to a limited degree, in Great Britain and France. In Germany the interrelated processes of ethnicization and assimilation (as in the United States and other declared immigration societies) did not take place, or only to a very limited degree.

The citizenship issue has already been studied in detail by Rogers Brubaker, a book that Panayi mentions in a footnote on the Citizenship Law of 1913 (p. 74, fn. 18). Brubaker's comparative approach would have provided Panayi with a carefully thought out approach and well defined terms. It remains unclear why Panayi does not even discuss (or question) Brubaker's findings in his introductory chapter.[2] It is certainly open to discussion whether or not the term "ethnic" is a useful concept for certain minorities in Germany, especially after 1960, and even more so after 1990. And it would have been interesting to learn if, when, why, and how Jews, Gypsies, and the other groups mentioned became ethnic and/or when they were treated as ethnic by the state or by other Germans. The difference between self-ascribed identities, identities ascribed by "ethnic leaders" or by the "ethnic group," and identities which are ascribed from outside, for instance by the state, is not an issue for Panayi.

This leads to serious problems, especially against the background of racist ideologies and laws. The definition of "Jewish" in the notorious Nuremberg laws of 1935 applied also to persons who regarded themselves not as Jewish but who were defined and persecuted as "Jews" by the German state. The same applies to other victimized groups, in particular to Gypsies. But these crucial differences do not concern the author.

Jews are a case in point: For Panayi Jews were an "ethnic minority" in medieval Germany, and from the premodern period throughout 1933. For each of these periods, but in particular for the premodern period, and even more so for the nineteenth century, it is rather problematic to use the term "ethnic minority" without any discussion of what "ethnic" and "ethnicization," and "minority" mean in the context of modern Jewish history. Although Panayi mentions David Sorkin's influential book on German-Jewish history, he does not discuss Sorkin's concept of a Jewish subculture.[3] Few, if any specialists of German-Jewish history would agree with Panayi's uncritical approach in this case.

The terms ethnicity and ethnic are notably absent from the standard works on German-Jewish history, some of which Panayi refers to in his footnotes. There is a broad agreement among historians of modern Jewish history that around 1900 a process of Jewish "dissimilation" began in Imperial Germany. For this period the term "ethnic" could certainly be discussed. But again, the use of that term is far from being an accepted mainstream viewpoint and would require a careful explanation and

discussion. The authors of the four volume "German-Jewish History in the Modern Period," edited by Michael A. Meyer, which is regarded as the standard reference on German-Jewish history in the modern period, do not describe German-Jewish history in the period 1780-1933 in ethnic terms, nor does Shulamit Volkov in her standard-textbook on this subject .[4] But Panayi does not mention these important studies; instead he relies in many instances on Ruth Gay's "The Jews of Germany," a richly illustrated popular history of German Jewry, and on a number of outdated works from the 1960s.The term subculture, which allows for shifting boundaries and a certain degree of permeability, might have been a more useful concept than "ethnic minority" to tackle the problem of describing the experience of rather diverse "minorities" and other marginalized groups within the modern German context, not all of whom were strictly "ethnic."

The book contains countless not carefully thought out sections, paragraphs and terms. Panayi uses, for instance, the term "Ostjuden" for Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe in Imperial Germany (p. 89) without explaining that this term was highly charged and reflects rather stereotypical images and imaginations of "Jews" than actual Jewish immigrants. Interestingly, Steven Aschheim's important book on this subject shows up in a footnote, but its thesis is not discussed.[5] A typical paragraph may illustrate the problems of Panayi's approach. In a section on the rise of scientific racism in Imperial Germany Panayi writes just after discussing the ideas of German nationalists: "By the outbreak of the First World War the scientific racism which would lead to Nazi eugenics had established itself in Germany. The First International Hygiene Exhibition in Dresden in 1911 opened the German Hygiene Museum. The Racial Hygiene Society, founded in Berlin in 1905, represented an organization which unified 'Pan-German Aryan ideologues' and social hygienists." (p. 88) The Dresden Hygiene Museum was actually opened in 1930. Admittedly the First Hygiene Exhibition in 1911 helped to popularize scientific "racism" (it attracted 5 million visitors), but to reduce its concept and organization to proto-Nazi eugenics in one sentence is an extremely one-sided view. Some readers might assume from this sentence that the Hygiene Museum was a museum of scientific racism run by extremist proto-Nazis (it was not). Apart from this literally thrown in piece of information this section points to two other problems. Throughout the book Panayi heaps facts upon facts, often without putting in a paragraph with some comment or explanation. And throughout chapters 1-4, i.e. the chapters covering the periods before 1933, Panayi makes numerous remarks referring to the Nazi period. At times, he is aware of problems of hindsight, but often the uninformed reader is led to believe that Germany was firmly on the track to Nazi rule many decades before 1933.

The often unclear sentences create profound problems in the chapter on the Nazi era. Here Panayi states: "Once the Second World War broke out, the Nazis quickly defeated Poland ..." (p. 166). Or he claims: "Holland deported 110,000 of its Jews to the Nazi extermination camps in Poland, ..." (p. 174). Uninformed readers might assume that Germany did not start the Second World War and that Dutch Jews and Jewish refugees living in the Netherlands were deported by the Dutch state rather than the Germans occupying the Netherlands. Another passage describes the so called *Kristallnacht* or night of broken glass: "The Nazis publicized the assassination of an official at the German embassy in Paris, Ernst von Rath, by a Polish Jew, on 7 November [1938] and, in fact, turned him into something of a martyr. This led to the nationwide explosion of antisemitic violence on the night of 9-10 November, which resulted in the destruction of 7.500 shops and more than 250 synagogues, as well as 236 deaths" (p. 170). Panayi never tells the reader that the pogrom was carefully organized and orchestrated by Goebbels, Heydrich and other leading party officials and executed by SA and SS-members. While some bystanders did join the SA and SS and almost no "ordinary German" defended Jews, it was not a spontaneous popular revolt as the Goebbels propaganda machine claimed and as Panayi suggests here.

Countless sentences and paragraphs begin with "the Nazis ...," but with the sole exception of the notorious Robert Ritter, a scientist who specialized on the Gypsies, and Hitler himself, leading figures of Nazi Germany such as Himmler, Heydrich, Eichmann, Rosenberg, Goebbels and others whose role was crucial in terms of persecuting minoritiesare completely absent; so are (with very few exceptions) functional elites, the SS, the "Einsatzgruppen" (mobile-killing units), the German army, professionals, and ordinary Germans. Instead Panayi opts for the umbrella-term "the Nazis." In this light, it comes as a surprise that Panayi readily agrees with Daniel J. Goldhagen's controversial argument that ordinary Germans, not all of whom were Nazis, harbored "eliminationist" antisemitic views (p. 165, fn. 129). Suffice to say that important works such as Saul Friedlander's "Nazi Germany and the Jews" are not cited.[6] Even the paragraphs on the extermination of the Jews contain factual errors, for instance when Panayi claims that Treblinka, Belzec, Sobibor, and Chelmno were concentration camps which "would eventually develop" into extermination camps,

when in fact these were extermination camps from the start (p. 179).

The main reason for the thorough lack of methodological clarity is Panayi's refusal to draw the reader into what he regards as fruitless theoretical debates. But Panayi's evasive way of "clearing up the jargon" belies his effort of writing history for an academic audience. A textbook requires clear definitions of crucial terms and concepts and a clear and understandable style, but not simplistic, at times even crude language and superficial "research" by the author.

Notes

[1]. Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas*, London 1997.

[2]. Rogers Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany*, Cambridge, Mass 1992.

[3]. David Sorkin, *Transformation of German Jewry, 1780-1940*, New York 1987.

[4]. Shulamit Volkov, *Die Juden in Deutschland 1780-1914*, Munich 1997. Michael A. Meyer (ed.), *German-Jewish History in the Modern Period*, 4 Volumes, New York 1997.

[5]. Steven Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers: The East European Jew in German and German-Jewish Consciousness*, Madison 1982.

[6]. Saul Friedlander, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, New York 1997.

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