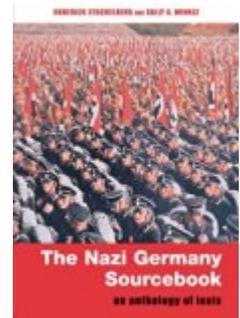


Roderick Stackelberg, Sally A. Winkle. *The Nazi Germany Sourcebook: An Anthology of Texts.* London and New York: Routledge, 2002. 496 pp. \$90.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-415-22214-3.



Reviewed by Warren Rosenblum

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In their 1994 collection, *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, Anton Kaes and his fellow editors exploded the genre of the primary source reader.[1] Alongside well-known documents like the Weimar Constitution and the *Spartakus Manifesto*, the work introduced obscure texts on a hodge-podge of traditionally marginal topics like fashion, sexual promiscuity, murder, drug use, and radio. Most of the documents had no transparent connection to the great political and social issues of the Weimar Republic, yet the reader was immediately embraced by political and social historians. The collection has proven a wonderful asset in the classroom. Its brilliance was precisely in how the assembled artifacts made the task of cultural analysis seem necessary and accessible. The strange articles and vignettes cried out for interpretation.

But what about the Nazi era? The weight of a "totalitarian state," a destructive war, and Holocaust seem to force a measure of sobriety and rigidity upon the teaching of the Nazi era. Perhaps the tools of the cultural historian seem trivial next to the more traditional apparatus for piecing his-

tory together *wie es eigentlich gewesen*. Still, I wish the editors of the present anthology had done more to broaden the scope of their documentation. The documents describe the evolution of National Socialism, the consolidation of Nazi power, Hitler's march toward war, and the unfolding of the Final Solution. But there is amazingly little here on women, youth and family, sexuality and science, sports, education, and labor. Nor does the reader encourage students to explore the complexities of popular consent, participation, and resistance which have been so much a part of recent scholarship on the Third Reich. As a primer on Nazism, this reader will undoubtedly be useful for classes on modern Germany, twentieth-century Europe, and, of course, the Third Reich. As a sourcebook on Germany under the Nazis, however, it barely scratches the surface.

The collection is divided into seven sections, proceeding more or less in chronological order. The first two sections concern the roots of National Socialism in Imperial Germany and the ascendance of Hitler during the Weimar Republic. The next two parts cover the Third Reich from 1933 to

1935 and 1936 to 1939 respectively. The final sections contain documents on the Second World War, the Holocaust, and the legacy of the Third Reich in German politics and culture.

The selections, which are generally two to four pages in length, include speeches, memoirs, proclamations and decrees, news articles, and letters. Many of the documents are newly translated, and a few are published here in English for the first time. Every selection is preceded by a brief "critical analysis," describing the origins of the text and the background of the authors. The editors have aimed to produce a work that could be used not only as a supplement to textbooks, but might potentially stand by itself. The more or less chronological organization provides a certain narrative pull, while the short, clear, and balanced introductions to each chapter offer broader contextualization.

The anthology's first section trots out the usual suspects in the pre-history of National Socialism. Richard Wagner, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, and Heinrich Class rail against Jewish influence in German culture and public affairs. Heinrich Treitschke celebrates war as the creator of the state and "the only remedy for ailing nations." Adolph Stoecker attacks Social Democracy and calls for a nationalist movement to counteract its appeal.

Such documents offer a snapshot of radical right-wing ideologies under the Kaiserreich, with particular emphasis upon anti-Semitism. It would have been useful, however, to include a document or two addressing the social foundations of ultra-nationalism and its growing popular appeal. Recent historians have done much to uncover the emotional building-blocks of rightwing politics in the *Kaiserreich*: students need to explore precisely how and why the intemperate ramblings of ultra-nationalist writers actually mattered and to whom.

Not surprisingly, the documents from the First World War have a stronger sense of conjunc-

tural specificity. The selection from Ernst Troeltsch's essay on "the spirit of German culture" reveals how the war forged a stronger nationalist sensibility even among moderates. The Proclamation from the German Fatherland Party likewise shows the heightened force of nationalism during wartime and the dream of a nationalist mobilization that transcended politics.

The documents from the Weimar era address the social and political context of the Republic, the foundations of National Socialist ideology, and Nazi strategies for coming to power. The broader context is presented in images of political and economic upheaval. The section starts with revolutionary proclamations from November 1918 and includes selections from the Weimar Constitution, the program of the 1929 Communist International, and selections from memoirs reflecting on the experience of inflation and economic depression. The section includes the decree from "Reich-Chancellor Kapp" on the day of his notorious putsch and from the Reich leaders in 1932 announcing their takeover of the state government of Prussia.

From a teaching perspective, perhaps the richest material here is from the selections on eugenics. Two texts are from the infamous 1920 book *Permitting the Destruction of Unworthy Life* by Karl Binding and Alfred Hoche. The contribution from Binding is especially illustrative and chilling. He asks: "Are there human lives which have so completely lost the attribute of legal status that their continuation has permanently lost all value, both for the bearer of that life and for society?" Binding goes on to argue that ordinary legal protections for the individual can and must be suspended in cases of chronic unconsciousness (coma) or "incurable idiocy." Hoche provides a cost-benefit analysis regarding care for the mentally retarded and concludes that society must overcome its "exaggerated humanism and overvaluation of mere existence." These excerpts, and the selection from Fritz Lenz's textbook on human

heredity, are well-chosen and well-edited, though the editors oddly identify Binding and Hoche simply as a "lawyer" and a "psychiatrist" respectively. In fact, Binding was one of the most highly regarded criminal law scholars of the Imperial era, while Hoche was a prominent professor of psychiatry.

The section includes a number of documents outlining the "principles" of the National Socialist Party. There is the notoriously vague party program of 1920, which eventually was both sanctified and ignored. The editors have also included three texts by Hitler from this period. Hitler's speech at his 1924 trial for treason is a tiresome recounting of the failed beer hall putsch. A brief excerpt from *Mein Kampf* presents the case for territorial expansion to the east at the expense of the Russians and their "Jewish" rulers. The January 1932 speech before the Industry club in Dusseldorf presents a more detailed argument against democracy and in support of leadership by a chosen elite. Here Hitler focuses upon the need for internal unity in order to withstand the onslaught of Bolshevism both at home and abroad. The speech is a striking attempt at presenting National Socialism as the last defense of bourgeois respectability, deflecting the image of Nazi Storm Troopers as rabble-rousers, brawlers, and threats to capitalism. Entries from Goebbels' diary from November 1932 to January 1933 offer a striking picture of the strategies and tactics of Nazi elites during a decisive period in their revolution.

Finally, four documents in this section present the standpoints of German conservatives in the Weimar Republic. Long, rambling excerpts from Arthur Moeller van den Bruck illustrate the intellectual undercurrents of the "Conservative Revolution" after the Great War. The editors have also included the infamous Manifesto of the Harzburg Front. More interesting, I think, is Chancellor Franz von Papen's speech of October 1932, in which he tries to carve out an authoritarian vi-

sion for Germany's future that is distinct from the Nazis'. Also instructive is a short letter from Hjalmar Schacht to Hitler from the summer of 1932. The retired President of the Reichsbank expresses his "unchanging sympathy" for Hitler and advises him "not to put forward any detailed economic program." Economic plans, he suggests, will not win an election. Economic measures, in any case, "vary with time and circumstances." What matters is the "spirit out of which they are born."

Most of the selections from the early and middle years of the Third Reich are from Reich laws and decrees, and speeches by Nazi officials. While the topics are diverse, the preponderance of official statements produces a certain monotony and, of course, privileges a top-down perspective on the consolidation of power and the initiation of policies. Moreover, the few excerpts included here from memoirs and diaries are surprisingly colorless and unenlightening. All in all, one truly starts to long for some "alternative" material.

The above notwithstanding, there are many indispensable documents here. The first Proclamation of the new government, from February 1, 1933, is an especially subtle, perhaps brilliant piece of political rhetoric. Signed by the whole cabinet and read on the radio by Hitler, the decree adopts an almost biblical tone in depicting the catastrophes wrought by fourteen years of internal dissension, Marxism, and liberalism. "We did not receive the equality and fraternity promised to us," Hitler intones, invoking the allure of the French revolutionary tradition, "but we did lose our liberty." The new government was to lead an alliance of the respectable classes in a "merciless war against spiritual, political, and cultural nihilism." Hitler's private remarks to army and navy commanders three days later were more substantive and also more radical in their promise to attack the international order and gain "new living space" in Eastern Europe through a program of "ruthless Germanization." In his speech to the leading industrialists, the *Fuehrer* is

similarly blunt about a plan to "eliminate" Marxism at home.

Most of the laws reprinted in this section have previously been published in English, in many cases repeatedly. Still, the editors were probably right to include the Reichstag fire decree, the enabling act, the Nuremberg Laws, and the laws on the civil service and eugenic sterilization. Much of Nazi policy was, of course, articulated in the cool, measured language of law, even if the juridical apparatus surrounding this legislation had been effectively destroyed. The laws created an important sheen of legitimacy, and their specific wording can be revealing. But does the average college student also need to read the Editorial Law of October 1933, the Law to Secure the Unity of Party and State, and the law of December 1936 mandating participation in the Hitler Youth? At some point the dull grey discourse of Nazi officialdom starts to offer limited pedagogical returns.

Perhaps the best opportunity for the editors to improve on previous documentation of the Nazi years was in regard to gender, religion, and the arts. Here, however, the material is surprisingly thin. The editors wisely included Hitler's speech to the Nazi women's section from September 1934, where he laid out his belief in the separation of spheres. They also included an interesting excerpt from a Nazi publication concerning the training of women for the "calling of motherhood." The documents help show the links between Nazism's patriarchal character and its obsessions with birthrates, mothering, and a cult of domesticity, but they barely begin to engage the key question of what German women desired and feared in the Nazi revolution, and what they lost and gained over the course of the Third Reich. On religion, there is the famous statement by the "Confessing Church" in 1934 opposing the Nazification of Protestant church affairs and the Concordat of July 1933 between the Reich Government and the Pope concerning the respective obli-

gations of Catholics and the new state. The reader also includes the Pope's famous Encyclical of March 1937, "With Burning Anxiety," which questioned whether the Nazis had held up their end of the bargain. On the arts, there is only one very short entry on the nature and function of the Reich Chamber of Fine Arts.

The wartime texts are uniformly interesting, though again the great majority of texts represent elite perspectives. The average soldier is AWOL in this collection and, apart from a fascinating excerpt from the memoir of Marion Graefin Doenhoff, women at the home front are not heard.

The material on the war itself includes a mix of personal reflections, army directives, diplomatic correspondence, and foreign reporting. For all his flaws as an analytic historian, William Shirer's eyewitness reports are riveting and insightful. Goebbels' diary entries on the war provide a perverse sort of counterpoint. Chilling memoranda, notes, and decrees on the conduct of the war clarify the real intentions of German leaders at each stage of the conflict.

The editors have done a great service in printing Goebbels' notorious speech at the Berlin Sportpalast after the German disaster at Stalingrad. This oration, remembered today by Berliners as the highpoint of collective madness, included a call and response in which 17,000 people enthusiastically declared their ongoing support for total war. Here Goebbels introduced the powerful and subsequently much-repeated claim that Germany's battle in the east was a defense of European civilization against the marauding force of Bolshevism. Three moving excerpts from leaflets of the "white rose" resistance movement offer a powerful rebuttal to the orgy of enthusiasm in the Sportpalast. The collection includes a series of documents related to the July 20 conspiracy of German officers.

The documents on the Holocaust tend to be more personal and are surprisingly fresh. They include court testimony by perpetrators, memoirs

of survivors, and two farewell letters found on Jewish victims in the Ukraine. The editors have managed to provide a coherent narrative of the disaster, without relying upon the by-now standard set of documents found in many Holocaust readers.

The editors' most creative turn was to include an entire section (fifteen documents) on the "aftermath of Nazism and the historians' debate." They reprinted the first directive of the U.S. occupation forces in 1945, as well as a long and revealing Soviet dissent from the numerous acquittals at Nuremberg. Various speeches by postwar leaders of East and West Germany, especially Konrad Adenauer, demonstrate the leeriness of German officialdom toward confronting the past.

Four selections from the infamous "historians' debate" in the Kohl era are also included. This furious exchange concerning historian Ernst Nolte's attempt to relativize Nazi atrocities undoubtedly played an important role in the political culture of 1980s West Germany. I wonder, however, whether this discussion is worthy of inclusion in a course on Nazism—or even a course on twentieth-century German history. Habermas himself observes that "one could ignore [Nolte's] scurrilous philosophy... if neo-conservative historians did not feel obliged to make use of just this form of revisionism." Given that "neo-conservatives" have, for the most part, long since repudiated Nolte's arguments, it seems pointless to subject American students to this stuff today.

The editors close the anthology with two published reports on hostility and violence toward foreigners in Germany since 1989. The articles are interesting, but where is the connection to Nazi Germany? It may well be that the orgies of xenophobic violence in Rostock and Hoyerswerda were somehow related to the legacy of the Third Reich, but that should be a question and not an assumption. To include documents on contemporary rightwing violence in a sourcebook on Nazism, is to place an awfully big historical

weight on the shoulders of a small, disparate group of angry, mixed-up young men.

This sourcebook on Nazi Germany will be a valuable addition to an instructor's bookshelf and will be helpful to some scholars as well. The work is less rich and comprehensive than Noakes and Pridham's three-volume compendium of documents and eyewitness accounts, but it is better organized and better edited and will be much easier to use in the American classroom.[2] It would be a good supplementary text for a course on the Third Reich, though the price tag may scare off some students.

I am less enthusiastic about the work as a stand-alone text. For the most part, this is a top-down approach to history, which offers slight access into the lifeworlds of those standing at the margins of power. When the voices of "ordinary people" appear, they are either vigorous supporters of Nazism or strenuous opponents (and frequently victims). What is missing from the collection is precisely what students need to understand most: the ambivalent Nazi supporters, who contributed to Hitler's revolution because of opportunism, tactical considerations, a sense of duty, or a specific and limited set of convictions which overlapped with the Nazis.

This book provides a solid introduction to the beliefs, strategies, and actions of an especially powerful and destructive clique of men. For the rest of the story, students must look elsewhere.

Notes

[1]. Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, and Edward Dimendberg, *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook* (Berkeley: University of California, 1994).

[2]. J. Noakes and G. Pridham, *Nazism: A History in Documents and Eyewitness Accounts, 1919-1945* (New York: Schocken, 1984).

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