

Committee. Lemmons then returns to a chronological approach, tracing how Thälmann's role changed from "the prophet of a future Germany to the savior of German socialism" under Erich Honecker (p. 15). The penultimate chapter reviews the post-1989 controversy over the dreadful Ernst Thälmann National Monument in Berlin, dedicated in 1986, which after lively post-*Wende* controversy still stands. The book extends Alan L. Nothnagle's analysis in *Building the East German Myth: Historical Mythology and Youth Propaganda in the German Democratic Republic, 1945–1989* (1999).

Lemmons concludes that the attempt to build the Thälmann myth ultimately failed because it was a manifestation of a foreign ideology that, despite enormous effort and expense, was unable to legitimize a state that failed to satisfy its citizens.

The book is thoroughly researched. Lemmons has incorporated a wide range of sources and has found many a striking quotation. He builds a convincing case that Thälmann was a pseudo-religious figure with parallels in Soviet propaganda.

The primary weakness is that Lemmons tells us more than we need to know, particularly during the extended discussion of the GDR. The basic themes of GDR propaganda were relatively straightforward: the brave struggle of communists who suffered and died in the battle against Nazi tyranny to prepare for a "better Germany"; the necessity of learning from the Soviet Union (which was the way to "learn victory"); the need to carry on Thälmann's legacy in fighting revanchist neo-Nazis in the Federal Republic of Germany; and confidence that the inevitable laws of history would realize the secular utopia that Ernst Thälmann had seen at a distance, like Moses on the mountain top. I am interested in the topic, but Lemmons provides more than is needed to support his relatively straightforward case. It is always difficult to cut hard-won material, but the book would be better were it a hundred pages thinner.

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DAVID B. DENNIS. *Inhumanities: Nazi Interpretations of Western Culture*. New York: Cambridge University Press. 2012. Pp. xvi, 541. \$35.00.

David B. Dennis has rendered the highly important, if arduous, service of reading through the Nazi Party's *Völkischer Beobachter* and controlling its content for articles on culture. The *VB*, as it was known in everyday jargon, was founded by Adolf Hitler's mentor, Dietrich Eckart and eventually published by Hitler's self-styled party philosopher, Alfred Rosenberg, who later relinquished the chief editorship to subordinates. It appeared first in Munich and later also in Berlin. Dennis has summarized and analyzed many articles under such headings as Germanic history, music, the military-front experience, opposition to the Enlightenment, and antisemitism. The critics whose opinions he adduces tend to repeat themselves, and Nazi clichés abound. Hence the composer Giacomo Meyerbeer is described by critic

Lore Reinmoeller as "little more than a plagiarist," and Reinmoeller said about Felix Mendelssohn that until the advent of the Nazis he had been represented in "attractive Jewish propaganda as the rescuer and savior of the whole German tradition" (p. 108). Dennis treats as much what the Nazis were against as what they were for, and in the latter category there is little that strikes today's reader as original. This book will be a significant addition to the growing body of works on culture under Nazi aegis.

I have a few observations to make which are not meant as a criticism but rather should aid the non-specialist reader in evaluating this source. First, how representative are the opinions expressed by the *VB* critics? The *VB* was read by two groups of Germans: the majority of Nazis, especially when they were card-carrying party members, and those who wanted to appear as Nazis. This was important in many cases where full commitment to Hitler's movement was withheld, but Nazi spies were always looking for tokens of regime fealty. It may safely be assumed that convinced Nazis agreed with the ideological interpretations of German cultural phenomena proffered by Rosenberg's scribes and shared the prejudices against anything deemed to be non-German, for instance what Nazis liked to call "American civilization"—they flatly denied Americans had culture. *VB* content therefore represented a good cross-section of official Nazi opinion on things cultural, even if not every opinion was shared, or understood, by all readers. Anything on Richard Wagner, for example, would interest only the most educated or idiosyncratic of Nazis, for in the Nazi Party in general Beethoven was much more popular and accessible.

Even as an indicator of a good cross-section of party opinion, though, the *Völkischer Beobachter* was only a limited Nazi tool of cultural expression, to say nothing of cultural control. This circumstance was owed to Rosenberg's weak position in the party and in the Third Reich. Very few people, including Hitler himself, took him seriously, and he had several rivals, a few of whom were much more powerful than he was. With control over it parceled out to several agencies under different party grandees, culture in the Third Reich was not a monolith. Rosenberg himself headed only party offices and did not receive a Reich ministry (such as Hermann Göring and Joseph Goebbels already possessed in 1933) until 1941, when Hitler made him Minister of the Occupied Eastern Territories, where he could cause few commotions. In 1933 Reich Propaganda Minister Goebbels established his Reich Culture Chamber, which to all intents and purposes extended supreme control over most cultural activities in the Reich. But Göring still controlled opera houses in Berlin and Kassel, Reich Education Minister Bernhard Rust oversaw museums and the universities, and the Bayreuth Festival was firmly in the Wagner family's hands, with Hitler weighing in when necessary. This diversification could lead to conflicts, after which Rosenberg usually was the one who threw in the towel, and frequently contrary opinions could be voiced by creators in the Nazi

Reich depending on which patron they adhered to. One important example of this was provided by the progressive composer Carl Orff. When his scenic oratorio *Carmina Burana* premiered in Frankfurt in summer 1937, Rosenberg's *VB* critics condemned it, and for a few days Orff thought that his artistic life in the Third Reich was over. But then he received accolades, in a specialist journal, from a music critic who was on Heinrich Himmler's SS staff, and his career in the Third Reich took flight. The pluralist structures that today are known to have characterized the Third Reich also determined intellectual patterns and processes, including art criticism—within limits. In the newspaper world alone, Goebbels controlled two papers of his own, *Der Angriff*, for the common man, and, during the war through editorials, *Das Reich*, which catered to intellectuals. While some of Rosenberg's collaborators would have written for *Der Angriff*, and much in a Rosenberg vein, one would be hard pressed to locate their names on the pages of *Das Reich*.

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CLAUS-CHRISTIAN W. SZEJNMANN and MAIKEN UMBACH, editors. *Heimat, Region, and Empire: Spatial Identities under National Socialism*. (The Holocaust and Its Contexts.) New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 2012. Pp. xvi, 280. \$90.00.

Appearing in the series "The Holocaust and Its Contexts," this volume offers twelve essays of the latest regional research on Nazism bookended by historiographical chapters that introduce and evaluate the studies presented. Most of the essays delve into some aspect of German fascism, Nazi notions of *Heimat*, the ideology of *Lebensraum*, colonialism, and the history of resettlement policies and persecution. In the introduction, editors Claus-Christian Szejnmann and Maike Umbach succeed in clarifying the major historiographical issues, and in the concluding chapter a critical commentary is offered by Geoff Eley that effectively builds upon the case studies by pushing the research agenda further. The volume is enhanced by illustrative maps and figures (unfortunately the reproductive quality of the images is low), a glossary of terms and abbreviations, and a detailed index.

At the outset, the editors argue that new notions of space, territoriality, and empire are shaping the latest regional studies of Nazism—both in Germany proper and the occupied territories—and that these trends have also been marked by increasing interest in the Holocaust. For decades regional approaches have been at the forefront of this historiography, starting in Bavaria with Martin Broszat's attempt to historicize the Third Reich. But, as Szejnmann and Umbach assert, for too long has the idea persisted "that in German history, dictatorships were centralized and centralizing projects, while localism and regionalism were conducive to liberal pluralism" (p. 9). The editors' aim is not to over-stress "the importance of regional history at the ex-

pense of national histories of National Socialism" but rather "to explore how one set of spatial identities produced and configured the other- and vice versa" (p. 13). This relational approach to cultural history demands nuanced analysis of the mediating factors and forces "between the provincial and the national," as elucidated by the historian Celia Applegate. Are the individual contributors collectively able to fulfill the aim of the book as set forth by its editors? Eley points out in his commentary that there is another inherent challenge. The expansionist drive was a defining feature of Nazism, keeping the idea of *Heimat* in flux as Germany's borders changed rapidly during the war and constantly reshaping and testing the idea of a "native Germany" and racially pure Germans.

Given this diverse fluctuation of national space and territorial ambitions, where does one situate the Holocaust? Actually, this is neither a central question nor a theme taken up in the book. Although the editors recognize that regional approaches to Nazism have hindered a more critical "wholesale reappraisal of spatial diversity," one that can be "linked to the evils of the dictatorship," the case studies in the collection treat the broader contexts of the Holocaust rather than the Nazi history of Jewish persecution and antisemitism.

The volume is structured in three parts: "Re-Moulding Regional Identities," "Transforming Spaces," and "Re-Making Ethnicities." Each chapter offers original research on the political districts (*Gaue*) and historical regions of Swabia, Lower Saxony, Upper Rhine, Pomerania, Silesia, Posen, Saxony-Anhalt, and Danzig-West Prussia. Ten of the twelve essays focus on the war years.

Martin Steber returns to the theme of the making of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, but with a cultural focus on the regional rhetoric and particular fantasies and ambitions of the Bavarian-Swabian National Socialists led by Gauleiter Karl Wahl. In his engaging chapter on Lower Saxony, Detlef Schmiechen-Ackermann raises a key point: in carving out what is distinctive about a region, historians are selective (and subjective), choosing to highlight a local person, corporation, or institution (e.g., concentration camp). Schmiechen-Ackermann's contribution is unusual because it summarizes the findings of a German research project involving historians at universities in Hanover, Oldenbourg, Osnabrück, and Göttingen who have compared the different ways that the Nazis forged a "people's community" within one region. Schmiechen-Ackermann and his colleagues found that local variations in Nazi ideology "did not arise from a deliberately decentralized spatialization of politics" but from other factors such as diverse demography, local economic realities, and longstanding political traditions (p. 54). Thomas Williams's excellent essay on the western borderland of the Upper Rhine illuminates how Nazis sought to turn Alsatians into Germans, stressing the importance of local *Raumforschung*, the interwar borderlands movement, and Nazi-era propaganda. In his lucid prose, Winson Chu describes the interwar setting in Poland, where different