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Schooling and Society

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Book Reviews

Karl A. Schleunes. *Schooling and Society: The Politics of Education in Prussia and Bavaria, 1750-1900.* Oxford, New York, and London: Berg, 1989. Pp. 269. Cloth $52.50.

A much repeated truism credits nineteenth-century Germany, especially Prussia, with the most advanced public education system in Europe. Karl Schleunes's *Schooling and Society* examines this notion by exploring the politics of education not only in Prussia, but also Bavaria. What emerges is an informative discussion of how the fortunes of public school reform were tied to various government leaders' goals for education, in association with the wider political and social scene.

Professor Schleunes states that the revolution in education in nineteenth-century Prussia and Bavaria had eighteenth-century origins. Accordingly, the social elite, who controlled politics, feared society's impending disintegration, which did occur in Napoleon's wake. Rebuilding society became paramount, and many suggested educational reform as a starting point. Not only were elite schools destined for curricular reform, but discussions emerged concerning public schools for the lower orders. This was justified by Enlightenment and Physiocratic thought, which awarded these people human reason and a vital part in economic development. Fears abounded that educating the masses would lead to social unrest. Reformers argued that separate schools and curricula would preserve the social hierarchy, and the lower orders would be taught to accept their station in life.

At the turn of the century, Baron Karl vom Stein and Maximilian von Montgelas initiated education programs that were part of general reform plans for Prussia and Bavaria, respectively. State commitment to public education was born, but it developed in fits and starts. Much depended on whether reform-minded men were in or out of office, the financial status of the country (whether at war or peace), and how effectively opponents, especially religious leaders, rallied to challenge new education policies.

In both countries, educational reform ran afoul of the church. Traditionally, the church controlled all facets of education, and nineteenth-century reforms chipped away at these prerogatives. Catholic leaders and conservative Protestants tried to inhibit the trend toward secular control of schools. One way to achieve this was to cling to the clergy's monopoly over school inspectors' posts. Also, religious leaders fought against nondenominational schools and teacher-training seminars. This conflict is documented through discussions of various ministers of education and their attempts to create

general school reform plans or legislation that would either help or hinder the church's cause.

The reputation of public school teachers varied according to political fortune and the particular politician in charge. Sometimes these men (Prussia, in particular, did not want to discuss the possibility of female elementary school teachers) were regarded as evil liberals, especially during the 1840s and the beginnings of the teachers' association movement. After 1871, many heralded the *Volksschule* teachers as the torchbearers bringing the masses out of darkness into the light of German national identity. Kaiser Wilhelm II believed this to be true. The fallacy that school teachers could effectively socialize the masses was obvious in the failure to Germanize the Poles in eastern Prussia in the 1890s. The teachers are credited, however, with contributing to the general public's developing German nationalism.

Schooling and Society can be appreciated on several levels. It introduces the important question of state involvement in education and its evolution. By focussing on Prussia and Bavaria, similarities and differences emerge to justify public schooling. This, in turn, provides insight into the internal politics of both countries, elucidating for many the vagaries of Bavarian politics. For the specialist, intriguing people and their ideas appear and shed light on the nineteenth-century educational reform process, or the attempts to stop it. Sources used are diverse, ranging from diaries of nineteenth-century school teachers to histories of German education. The list of sources consulted and archives used bear witness to the time and effort that went into the preparation of this book. Although a comparative study, it does not become a mechanical reiteration that Prussia did this while Bavaria did that. Professor Schleunes has presented a well-written and insightful discussion of the politics of public educational policy in Prussia and Bavaria.

JOANNE SCHNEIDER, *Rhode Island College*

Werner J. Cahnman. *German Jewry: Its History and Sociology Selected Essays.* Ed. and intro. Joseph B. Maier, Judith Marcus, and Zoltan Tarr. New Brunswick and Oxford: Transaction Publishers, 1989. Pp. 280. Cloth $39.95.

The German-American historical sociologist Werner J. Cahnman devoted much of his scholarship to relations between Germans and Jews, especially those in his native Bavaria. This anthology brings together twelve of his essays on such topics written between 1941 and his death in 1980. It would seem that about half appear here for the first time, although the editors have not provided information about previous publication for several of the articles.

The collection is extremely uneven. Some of the essays concerning Cahnman's personal and family history will probably interest only a handful of social historians. That is true of the articles on his social-activist aunt,