

over borders, Von Bülow proves that transnational approaches are often necessary to explain the mysteries of national histories.

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***Inventing the Silent Majority in Western Europe and the United States: Conservatism in the 1960s and 1970s.* Edited by Anna von der Goltz and Britta Waldschmidt-Nelson. Washington, D.C. and Cambridge, UK: German Historical Institute and Cambridge University Press. 2017. Xiii + 412 pp. \$120.00 (hardback).**

Professors Anna von der Goltz of Georgetown University and Britta Waldschmidt-Nelson of the University of Augsburg have assembled a collection of nineteen different essays on how and why conservatism changed in the USA and Western Europe during the 1960s and 1970s. Although one essay deals with France and another with the Netherlands, the book mostly concentrates on the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG or West Germany as it was commonly known then), the UK and the USA. There is a certain logic to that choice, to American readers especially, because the UK and West Germany have been the two most important allies of the USA since the 1960s. The book's very commendable goal is to bring a transnational and comparative approach to the history of contemporary conservatism, a topic seldom studied in that way.

Comparing and contrasting the rise of what Americans like to call the New Right across national boundaries yields many insightful findings. Among the most important are the crucial semantic differences among conservatives in the FRG, UK and USA, the differences in church-state relations and the role of the media there, and how these things helped encourage, retard and shape the New Right's rise.

While several of the essays deal with aspects of the semantic issue, the one by Martina Steber, which focuses on that point, is especially helpful in making clear why American and British rightists embraced the conservative label, while their counterparts in West Germany did not. The association of the term 'conservative' with the Nazi Party made that word unacceptable to most rightists in post-war Germany, and blocked the emergence of a common New Right vocabulary in the USA and Western Europe. That, in turn, disrupted to a degree, the rise of a transnational conservative movement even in countries as closely tied as the FRG, UK and USA.

At least as important in inhibiting the rise of a New Right International was the complicated issue of church-state relations. Thomas Großbölting's essay does a fine job of explaining how and why a Christian Right movement could not emerge in West Germany, due to the government's heavy involvement in, and control over, the Catholic and Lutheran churches there. Großbölting argues persuasively that the USA's much more limited government support for (and control over) religious institutions provided the kind of freedom required for an overtly politicized conservative Christianity to develop, in the Sunbelt especially. Essays on the UK by Lawrence Black and John Davis also help here, by giving a sense of how the presence of an established (Anglican) church likewise dampened the emergence of an explicitly religious kind of challenge to liberal/social democratic reform in the mid to late 1960s.

Another major area of difference, which several essays and especially Frank Boesch's makes clear, had to do with the broadcast media, TV in particular. The dominance of

public television broadcasting in the FRG and UK inhibited the rise of the New Right, by restricting strongly free-market perspectives in news shows and heavy attention to sex, violence and materialism in entertainment ones (which tended to de-politicize the general population). In contrast, the heavily commercial nature of American television and movies afforded much more of an opening for strongly conservative ideas—libertarian ones especially—to emerge and for competing ones to decline.

*Inventing the Silent Majority* is also very effective in identifying areas of commonality, and not just difference, in the rise of contemporary conservatism since the 1960s. One of the book's most striking findings is how quickly conservatives in Western Europe embraced the concept—and the term—once President Richard Nixon first articulated them in 1969. Von der Goltz and Waldschmidt-Nelson lay out that contention in their fine introductory essay, and the eighteen other contributions all support it. Thus, a key area of agreement across national boundaries on the Right was that conservatives who disagreed with the trend of liberal/social democratic reform outnumbered its supporters. What that meant for the New Right was that its mission was at least as much about activating passive supporters as it was persuading them to think differently about specific public policy questions. Rousing these sorts of people to act politically proved very difficult, in part because changing conditions steadily reduced the likelihood of a return to the era of the 1950s that so many of them had preferred, and pushed the New Right to embrace more libertarian solutions with which the 'Silent Majority' often disagreed.

Another important parallel had to do with race/ethnicity. Essays by Donald Critchlow, Julian Zelizer and Bill Schwarz help the reader understand that just as there was racial backlash in Birmingham, Alabama in the 1960s, so, too, was there something similar in Birmingham, England, where Enoch Powell delivered his famous 'Rivers of Blood' address. Even in more homogeneous West Germany, the influx of guest workers from Turkey and elsewhere help stimulate a feeling that national unity and identity were in decline, which prompted a similar shift to the Right.

It is not possible to list all of the book's contributors here, all of their many insights or areas where disagreements appear. What one can say is that the sum of their efforts is consistently insightful and interesting, even when synthesizing well-known scholarly arguments and literature. The supporting details are often fresh and persuasive and will likely enhance many an undergraduate lecture even as graduate students find the book a useful guide to a dauntingly large literature.

If there is a significant weakness in *Inventing the Silent Majority*, it has to do with explaining clearly and completely the differences between the moderate conservatism so popular in the 1950s with the New Right kind that eventually arose to challenge it. Instead, there is a tendency to view Adenauer/Eisenhower/Macmillan-era conservatism as not really conservatism at all. The fault, one suspects, lies not in the scholars who contributed but rather in the existing body of scholarship on conservatism (in the USA especially), most of which is focused on strongly right-wing thought and action since the mid twentieth century, and tends to have a somewhat blurred view of the form of conservatism that preceded it.

Despite that limitation, *Inventing the Silent Majority* is a very fine collection and an outstanding example of what the transnational/comparative approach can do to increase our understanding of modern conservatism, and modern history more generally. This book deserves the attention of every scholar who works in those areas.

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