

Elektra, an atmosphere of actual physical excitement by means of rhythm and orchestration and the pointing of a climax. The weakness of all music drama that depends on a melodic line and not just on the creation of orchestral effect is, of course, that even the greatest composers have only a limited stock of melodic types, and these types are better suited to some moods than others. The exact difference between situations set to similar tunes cannot always be precisely conveyed, so that, in the case of Strauss, Chrysothemis's longing for husband and children and a normal life does not sound so very different from Arabella's hopeful eagerness for an ideal lover. Yet, at its best, Strauss's music enhances and enriches Hofmannsthal's text, just as settings by Schubert or Wolf enhance even the greatest poems, by giving the words overtones, a *Nachklang* that lingers in the memory, linking the verse indissolubly to the musical phrase to which it is set, enriching it by the orchestral colour that accompanies it.

It is in this evocation of a mood and in the creation of character that Strauss and Hofmannsthal excel. Hofmannsthal's words are

made richer and more imaginative—more poetical, in fact—by the sensuous music. And Strauss's music is given a precision by the words that it would otherwise inevitably lack. Their work is unmistakably opera—neither melodrama nor *Sprechgesang* nor musical comedy. It belongs to a tradition that, for all it has derived from them, goes back beyond Wagner and Verdi. Perhaps the Marschallin and Octavian are unthinkable without Mozart's Countess and Cherubino before them. It may be, indeed, that the Strauss operas mark the end of this tradition and that opera in the 20th century must break with it and start on something quite fresh. Berg and Krenek have hinted at a new style: but so far *Wozzeck* remains an isolated masterpiece. Stravinsky, in *The Rake's Progress*, has evaded the problem by going back to an earlier style and behaving, not only as if Wagner and Verdi had never written, but also as if Marschner and Weber had never existed. No contemporary composer has produced anything as successful, as moving, or as enjoyable as even the least good operas of Strauss. But no contemporary composer has had a Hofmannsthal as librettist.

James Joll

MIRRORS OF GERMAN HISTORY

THESE essays* written by German historians since the War, and now collected into a single volume by Dr. Hans Kohn, have a double interest. They reflect one of the most important sides of the intellectual discussion which is slowly beginning to revive in Western Germany and—without apparently meaning to do so—they pose the question: how far can the picture which the historian draws of the past influence the present and the future; how far is it simply a reflection of the present?

The different contributions, eleven in number besides Hans Kohn's two introductory essays, vary greatly in scope and quality. One

or two, like Professor Schnabel's discussion of Bismarck or Dr. Puttkamer's review of German-Polish relations, are concerned with working over again a theme of German history. The majority are more interested in the general concepts which the historian employs in analysing the past. Here there is a certain amount of repetition, but also an impressive honesty and a good deal of plain speaking.

It is a pity that Dr. Kohn was unable to include in his collection any essays by those historians who do not share in this search for a new view of German history and who are eager to restore the authority of the old. As a result, the book gives a one-sided picture of present trends in German historical thought; the opposite view is only to be learned by

* *German History: Some New German Views*. Edited by Hans Kohn. Allen and Unwin. 18s.

implication from those who are critical of the official German version of history as it has been taught in German universities and schools for so long.

The clearest account of the critics' objections is given by a young Swiss historian, Walther Hofer, who compresses them into three short sentences:

“Power is idealised and glorified.
War is made heroic and moral.
The national idea is radicalised and made absolute.”

The rest of the essays in this volume develop and illustrate these themes, sometimes subtly in Meinecke's study of Ranke and Burckhardt, sometimes more sharply in Hofer's own essay and those contributed by J. A. von Rantzau and Alfred von Martin. “The power, authority and prestige of the nation,” Hofer writes, “became the supreme values to which all moral, spiritual and economic values and functions were subordinated.” Or as Dr. Kohn puts it: “Many people everywhere succumbed to the demoniac temptations of power, but German historians surrounded this acceptance with the halo of a philosophy which they extolled for its ‘deep’ understanding of the forces of history and nature.”

This diagnosis is familiar enough, at least outside Germany. But why did this happen, what has led to the divergence between German and Western thought, which every writer in this volume underlines?

DR. HOFER again puts into a couple of sentences what is suggested by half a dozen of the contributors: the riddle of German intellectual development, he believes, lies in the nature of romanticism. Hofer quotes the remark of Fritz Strich: “When the German spirit follows its own path, it is the spirit of romanticism. Its classic ideal can only be realised with foreign assistance.” Romanticism is marked by that strong feeling for the irrational, the visionary and the boundless, by that exaggeration and over-intensification of ideas which so often mar German thought. “The history of the German spirit and hence of German historical thinking is principally characterised by the continuing disintegration of originally idealist conceptions. . . . That is the road from national feeling to race delusion, from cosmopolitanism to the dream of world

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rule, from a war of liberation to world conquest, from the national state to the organisation of *Lebensraum*, from humanism and Christianity to exclusive or tribal religion and ethics." So he concludes: "The central problem of revision is the romantic-idealist world of ideas as the ideological source of nourishment for German historical thinking."

Hofer, however, sketches an alternative answer which finds some confirmation in Hajo Holborn's concluding essay and which is more interesting to an English reader, if only because it is less familiar. "The typical characteristics of German historical thinking can be understood under this motto as well: Historical destiny treated Germany and Germans badly. . . . The dissatisfaction of German thought with German destiny extends not only to historical development, to the dimension of historical time, but also to the geographic situation and therefore to the dimension of historical space. If the first notion is illuminated by the refrain 'We came too late in history,' then the second notion can be expressed in the words 'We have an unfavourable position in the historical world.' Both thoughts justify the conviction that the extraordinary (that is, that which cannot be measured by European standards) is permitted, or even more, required, for Germany." The obvious instance of this is German *Weltpolitik* before 1914 which had exactly the characteristics of restlessness, touchiness, and envy to be expected of a late-comer out to grab what he could. Writing of that period, German historians have justified German behaviour on the grounds that national unification was achieved late and Germany had to make up for lost time if she was not to be left behind. In the same way, Germans never tire of explaining that their exposed position in Central Europe has forced them to follow a policy of expansion, whether they wanted to or not.

EITHER of these two suggestions—and they do not exclude each other—is illuminating in the study of German historical writing. Yet neither of them touches the real problem in the revision of the concepts of German history which is Dr. Hofer's aim. This becomes clearer if we go on to examine what the different contributors to the volume have to offer in the place of the traditional version.

At this stage, as Hans Kohn points out in his

introductory survey, a reinterpretation of German history is not a question of new facts or documents but of a new perspective, of a different set of values by which to judge what is already known.

What does this mean in practice? One possibility, canvassed by more than one of the historians represented in this volume, is to break down the national framework of historical study and of historical teaching. J. A. von Rantzau, for instance, in his essay on "The Glorification of the State in German historical writing," insists that, until German historians are prepared to formulate historical problems in wider terms than those of the nation-state and the study of state documents, they will be unable to find a way out of the blind alley into which they have led themselves and their pupils. Rantzau makes a sharp attack on Gerhard Ritter, the most influential of those German historians who seek to rescue the conservative-nationalist version of German history from its disastrous association with Hitlerism and to reassert the "unique character" of German development. "After all," Rantzau remarks, "cannibals could justify man-eating by the simple statement that it is an expression of their 'unique character'."

In the view, not only of Rantzau, but of Friedrich Meinecke, once the classical exponent of the Berlin tradition of Ranke, Droysen, and Treitschke, German historians have more to learn from Burckhardt than from Ranke—from Burckhardt who declined the succession to Ranke at Berlin and refused to let his view of history be bounded by the state or absorbed in politics. Such a reorientation of interest, the expansion of historians' horizons, breaking away from the egocentricity of national history, would benefit not only German but every nation's historical studies. Yet it only partially answers the question, how the history of Germany itself is to be seen and taught. Granted the wider knowledge of European history, granted (and it is a great deal to take for granted) the appreciation of the Slav and the French point of view, what is a German to make of the unification of his country, and of its history since unification, from Bismarck to Hitler? Is he expected to repudiate it altogether, to renounce it as a disastrous pursuit of false aims?

Something like this seems to be implied in several of these essays. But if so drastic a

revision of German views of their own history is to be undertaken, where is the ground on which the historian is to take his stand? For the German student and the German reader will not accept a French or a Polish point of view; they will only accept a point of view firmly founded in German history itself.

DR. HOFER's reply is given at the end of his essay: "It is important to search out those men and those ideas which warned that the wrong path had been taken, and sought to direct the German spirit back to its true historic mission. These men and these ideas, however, were forced aside by the main stream of development. We must now take up the search for the wasted opportunities. . . . The Germans must learn again to see that alongside and within the Prussian-German historical stream, there was also a German historical stream. . . . They must once again bring up into their historical awareness the fact that there operated, beside the authoritarian, power-oriented current of forces, liberal and democratic forces which merely did not have the historical chance to survive. They will then cease to be victims of the idea that, in liberal, democratic political and historical thinking, something alien is being forced upon them."

This is clear but not convincing. For why did the liberal and democratic forces "not have the historical chance to survive"? The answer is given by another contributor, Alfred von Martin. "Was there," he asks, "'another' Germany, better and wiser, besides Bismarck's Germany? There were individual Germans who did not share his ideas and who foresaw the oncoming time of troubles, the era of destructive wars and the inevitable catastrophe. . . . The enemies of Bismarck ought to be portrayed together by someone—it would be a small German hall of fame. Yet they were never anything but solitary individuals and their voices died away, almost unheard. . . . For, behind these Germans, there was no Germany they could represent."

As Dr. Hofer himself admits: "despite any effort at revision, Bismarck's foundation of the Empire remains a fact." So is the power and prestige which Germany enjoyed under the Empire, so is the map of Europe as it was redrawn by Hitler. You cannot displace facts by ghosts. To destroy the hold which the old view



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of German history has on German minds something more impressive is needed than the invocation of wasted opportunities and forgotten voices.

It is here that the limitations of the historian's own ability to effect such a change become apparent. For the faults of German historiography only reflect the faults of Germany's historical development. The glorification of power in German historical writing is a secondary problem: the real problem is the glorification of power in German life. History is a mirror in which every nation and every generation seeks and sees its own image. To change the image in the historian's mirror you must change the reality.

Dr. Hofer admits as much at the beginning of his essay: "The standard by which the true

and false values of the past must be differentiated anew can arise only out of the present." The only answer to the facts of the past is not the wasted opportunities of the past but new and different facts in the present. In the end the revision of German history will be achieved not by the criticisms of the historians, valuable though these are, but by a change of heart in the German people. The historian will reflect that change of heart, he may even contribute to it, but he cannot initiate it. If the German people have done with the worship of power, authority, and the nation, they will see the faults in their own history. If they have not, the historians represented in Dr. Kohn's volume will join the other unheeded voices of German history, and the image in the historian's glass will resume its familiar lineaments.

Alan Bullock

RUSSIAN OR MARXIST ?

Is the Soviet Union, as it exists today, to be regarded primarily as the creation of Marxist doctrine, which happened to find its first opportunity for practice in Russia, or as a development from the Russian national past in which a revolutionary theory of West European origin merely provided form and direction to forces which have remained essentially Russian? A case can be made for either view, with the one which stresses Russian nationalism and historical tradition implying a more hopeful prospect for the future than the alternative, which would admit the Russian people, or at least their rulers, to be thoroughly conditioned by an international revolutionary faith. It is highly consoling, especially for politicians and diplomats of the more conventional sort, to be able to assure oneself that world-revolution is a thing of the past and that the problem of the "cold war" is really much less intractable than might be supposed. The Communists, for their part, are involved by the controversy in a somewhat uncomfortable dilemma; they cannot afford to admit that the Soviet Union of Stalin and

Malenkov has departed in any way from the pure Marxist-Leninist faith; yet the popular belief that the Soviet régime is run by "realists" concerned only with Russian national interests is so advantageous to Soviet policy in its effect on Western opinion, that Communist propaganda finds it tactically convenient to encourage the spread of this belief indirectly, by presenting world issues in terms of relations between aggressive and peace-loving national states, rather than in the older language of international proletarian revolution.

Three books which have recently been published* are particularly relevant to the problem of estimating the relative importance of the contributions of Marxism and Russian tradition respectively to the shaping of the

* *German Marxism and Russian Communism*. By JOHN PLAMENATZ. Longmans, Green and Co. 25s.

Pan-Slavism: Its History and Ideology. By HANS KOHN. University of Notre-Dame Press. \$6.25.

How Russia is Ruled. By MERLE FAINSD. Harvard University Press. \$7.50. Oxford University Press. 60s.