

names Dowe's book is of little help. It only contains an index of institutions, and will help one to discover that there is an August Bebel Institute in Berlin (Historische Kommission) but not that there are papers and microfilms of his writings in Amsterdam (Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis (IISG) and Bonn (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung: Archiv der sozialen Demokratie), although this is mentioned in the book itself (p. 25, 139). A further criticism is that some answers given by institutions are not precise enough to be useful. Take, for example, the Fondazione Luigi Einaudi in Turin, Italy. There you find under the letter k — the designation for primary sources — only 'Fonds Luigi Einaudi, Paolo Thaon di Revel, Francesco Saverio Nitti, Agostino Rocca' (p. 128). No newcomer will recognize that the most important collection of the papers of the syndicalist (and later fascist) Robert Michels is hidden behind these names. Michels wrote the famous *Soziologie des Parteiwesens (Political Parties)* in 1911 and was a very good friend of Max Weber (Mommsen, Weber and Michels, in *Archives Européennes de Sociologie* 22, 1981, pp. 100–16). Perhaps the editor should have admonished the institutions more strongly to be precise with their information.

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James S. Roberts, *Drink, Temperance and the Working Class in Nineteenth-Century Germany*, London, George Allen & Unwin, 1984; xviii + 155 pp; £15.00.

James Roberts has produced a book that will certainly attract attention. It deals with an area of German social history which is still largely unresearched at a time when interest in the history of every-day life in Germany has greatly increased. The work will serve to shatter some of the views that have been widely held by German historians, especially the widespread notion that working-class alcohol consumption in the nineteenth century was primarily an escapist reaction to the miseries and deprivations arising out of the process of industrialization. In fact, the book consists of two main sections; and whilst the first is principally concerned with the history of the German temperance movement, the second pays closer attention to the drinking behaviour of German workers and the attitude of German Social Democracy.

According to Roberts the anti-alcohol movement in Germany was different from similar organizations in Britain or the United States in two main ways: it did not preach total abstinence, merely moderation when drinking alcohol (beer was regarded as a temperance drink for a long time); and it declined to attempt to alter the political structure in its favour by putting up or supporting temperance candidates in elections. Beyond this, however, the views of German anti-alcohol campaigners resembled those of similar movements in Protestant industrial states. In Germany as elsewhere, a simplistic view of the world prevailed in which alcohol, especially cheap spirits, was identified as the root cause of almost every social problem. Whether it was poverty or criminality, class conflict or the disintegration of the family — behind all these developments, in the view of the temperance movement, lurked the ruinous power of alcohol.

From an organizational point of view the history of the German movement can be divided into two phases. The first began at the end of the 1830s, but came to an abrupt end as early as the Revolution of 1848–9. In Prussia the movement clearly had the character of ‘reform from above’, as Robert shows. It was civil servants and above all priests, actively supported by the authorities, who formed the core of the leadership of the numerous temperance associations. In contrast, representatives of the liberal middle class played the decisive role in other parts of Germany. Unfortunately Roberts devotes only a few sentences to the often aggressive, sometimes even violent reaction of the labouring poor to the activities of the temperance associations. (We now have for the first time a more detailed local analysis of these conflicts in Ulrich Wyrwa’s study of Hamburg.)

In his account of the second phase of the anti-alcohol movement Roberts concentrates almost exclusively on the ‘German Association Against the Abuse of Spirits’ (DV) founded in 1883, without explaining why he deals with other similar organizations only in passing. The character of the DV, which in 1913 had around 40,000 members, was even more strongly marked by the liberal and Protestant bourgeoisie than its predecessors. Although it had some success in gaining influence in the state bureaucracy, its attempts to have temperance clauses inserted in legislation were largely abortive. As Roberts demonstrates convincingly, the DV ultimately failed when its political goals encountered the material privileges and sources of income of the Prussian Junkers (who were the main producers of schnaps in Germany).

Roberts turns primarily on those authors who see the anti-alcohol movement as an institution of social control. This interpretation fails, in his opinion, because ‘these men were not guided only by personal motives and narrow self-interest, as the concept of “social control” would seem to imply’ (p. 130). Instead Roberts claims that ‘the temperance movement belongs to the progressive tradition in German society and politics’ (ibid.). I am not convinced by this argument. Perhaps this is not the place to begin a debate as to what constitutes ‘progress’ and what does not. Certainly we know from our recent history that a great deal that has been celebrated as progress by some is seen by others, with equally good reason, as a loss or a step backwards. In any case it seems obvious that many characteristics of the German temperance organizations can quite properly be embraced by the concept of ‘social control’. For example, their efforts were directed almost exclusively at working-class alcohol consumption, although sections of the middle class and nobility (especially the officer corps and the student corporations) would have offered an equally rewarding challenge to temperance campaigners. Behind this, as Roberts has clearly demonstrated, lay the idea of combating not only the alcohol consumption of workers but also the social threat they represented, for this threat was primarily attributed to alcohol. Furthermore, around the turn of the century the temperance movement hoped its activities would lead on the one hand to a tightening of industrial work discipline and a strengthening of German industry on the world market, and on the other to an improvement in Germany’s military capability for future wars. One cannot accuse Roberts, who has brought all this evidence to light, of idealizing the temperance movement. I regard it as a good thing that all the material he produces does not necessarily fit his own interpretation.

In the second section of the book Roberts sketches the most important changes in the drinking habits of the working class. The first half of the nineteenth century saw a rapid spread of cheap potato schnaps. That was followed by a gradual substitution of beer for schnaps and finally, after the turn of the century, a gradual decline in alcohol

consumption generally. For Roberts, the most salient characteristic of working-class alcohol consumption in the nineteenth century is not frequent drunkenness, but the regular enjoyment of relatively small quantities of alcohol albeit spread throughout the whole day. Following a number of contemporary academics, such as Alfred Grotjahn or Max Weber, he develops the thesis that for the labouring poor alcohol 'was consumed not as a matter of choice but as a physiological necessity' (p.17). Thus, alcohol was on the one hand a source of energy which made good deficiencies in working-class diet, and on the other hand a kind of spice, especially in those areas where the diet of the poor consisted mainly of potatoes and bread. Whether this was a matter of necessity can only be shown by a structured comparison with other countries.

As early as 1891 Karl Kautsky, the chief theoretician of the social-democratic labour movement had formulated a semi-official position on the 'alcohol question'. Alcoholism was interpreted as a consequence of capitalism, one which affected not so much social-democratic workers but rather the unorganized, the 'lumpenproletarians' and the deprived 'petit bourgeois'. This assessment has already frequently been cited and discussed. What are less well known, it must be admitted, are some of those developments after the turn of the century which are outlined by Roberts. The foundation of a social-democratic Workers' Abstinence League (1903), the increasing efforts of the trade unions to limit the consumption of alcohol at the workplace, the discussion of the 'alcohol question' at the SPD party conference of 1907 and the decision to organize a 'schnaps boycott' in 1909 show that some sections of the organized labour movement were also concerned to alter the drinking habits of their supporters. Roberts specifically refuses to see this as a symptom of the 'embourgeoisement' of the SPD; and I find the arguments in the second part of the book convincing.

There are, of course, some weaknesses and gaps in the book which should not be overlooked. Roberts' approach to his statistical data is quite uncritical. The graphs he provides of per capita alcohol consumption are certainly useful; but one should not overlook the fact that the illegal distillation of spirits played a significant role, even if it is one that cannot be quantified. The same applies to the collection of household budget calculations in the book. However, Roberts nonetheless claims that 'the results of these studies can be taken as widely representative of popular expenditure patterns' (p.120). Yet precisely for alcohol consumption this is not the case, as the most important contemporary study of this type reveals. According to the Imperial Statistical Office, in 1907 beer consumption in household budgets was almost 50 per cent below the calculated average per capita consumption for the whole population. It is also significant that Roberts scarcely discusses in any systematic way the attitude of workers' wives to the alcohol consumption of their menfolk. A thorough perusal of the numerous workers' biographies would have brought to light a great deal of revealing evidence on this question. In spite of these criticisms, however, it must be said that Roberts has made a stimulating contribution to a part of German social history about which we previously knew little. What is especially pleasing is that he has avoided that moralizing which makes a large part of the contemporary literature on his subject so unpalatable.

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