

interested in Irish or Polish or Catalan history will find in it something to satisfy their interest. On the other hand, those looking for common patterns emerging out of a juxtaposition of separate and distinct national movements will look in vain. Nothing really emerges.

Why? Why should a study which has been so carefully prepared produce such meagre results? Perhaps there was some deficiency in the planning. Perhaps the comparativists make the mistake of compiling disparate essays by distinguished scholars, hoping that common features will become apparent without a common design. That may be a miscalculation. It might be better to entrust a single author with the analysis of different areas and times, sacrificing technical expertise for methodological uniformity. In general, the arrangement of books of this sort around distinct regions or periods may also be a source of weakness. Perhaps it would be wiser to cut across geographical and chronological boundaries in dealing with problems of comparative ideology, structure, organization, or loyalty. Or is it possible that the shortcomings of such books are inherent in their underlying assumption? Is it possible that the diversity and uniqueness of historical experiences are such that they do not lend themselves to fruitful comparison? To examine side by side the national movements in the nineteenth century of Irishmen, Poles, Catalans, South Slavs, Greeks, Italians, Scots, and Germans may enhance our understanding of each of them separately. But could it be that the differences in their history are so great that no meaningful pattern becomes discernible? Is that basically the trouble with this book? I wonder.

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FRANZ IRSIGLER. — *Die wirtschaftliche Stellung der Stadt Köln im 14. und 15. Jahrhundert.* Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1979. Pp. 413.

During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries Cologne remained the largest and economically strongest city in German-speaking Europe. This principal assertion of Franz Irsigler's fine monograph may come as little surprise to most students of medieval or urban history, though there are perhaps two reasons for the author's defence of the traditional view of Cologne's leading position. Impressive work over the past two decades has made Nuremberg the best researched of all German cities and has drawn much scholarly attention toward Cologne's major competitor for economic primacy in the period. In 1970, moreover, Wilhelm Schönfelder published a quite negative assessment of the city's economic development from 1370 to 1513. Now, Irsigler's firm command of the sources, broad comparative perspectives, and concern for making clear, significant generalizations on the basis of his very detailed research have resulted in a first-class book, one that offers the most judicious interpretation, as well as a vigorous reassertion of the importance of Cologne's role in the late medieval economy.

The focus of the study is the interpenetration of industrial production and commerce, a combination that distinguished Cologne and Nuremberg from other German towns (even Lübeck, the official leader of the Hanseatic League) and ranked them in type, though not in size, with great European cities like Florence

or Venice. From a wealth of numerical as well as non-quantitative sources, Irsigler argues that structural changes occurred within an urban economy that, though perhaps reduced somewhat in scale, still remained strong enough to maintain Cologne's primacy over an up-and-coming Nuremberg until the sixteenth century. What were the changes in and the salient features of that economy? Close examination of the textile, metal, leather, wine and spice trades brings Irsigler to several important conclusions. While there was a major shift from woollens to fustian and silk production, textiles remained Cologne's chief export industry during the fifteenth century. Naturally Irsigler stresses the significance of the *Verlag* in the production of export goods; particularly interesting, however, was the remarkable role of rich Cologne craftsmen in organizing the domestic or putting-out system. In contrast to their counterparts in the Netherlands or Northern Italy, they preserved their control throughout the fifteenth century in the woollen and metal industries, though much less so in leather and in the newer fustian and silk trades, where the need to secure more distant markets gave merchants the upper hand. Irsigler argues that the justification for *Verleger*, whether wealthy craftsmen or merchants, lay usually in credit conditions rather than in new production techniques. Indeed, he believes current research places too much emphasis on the exploitative aspects of putting-out and overlooks the simple fact that most exporting industries could not have developed without *Verleger*. Besides the extension of the domestic system fifteenth-century Cologne saw other tendencies in its big export trades: greater division of labour and specialization, a trend away from primary toward finishing processes, the use of some technical innovations and new sources of energy, and wide play for individual entrepreneurship in both commerce and domestic industry. The need for raw materials as well as a steadily developing division of labour between urban and rural or small-town trades meant, in addition, that Cologne transformed the agricultural and industrial structure of its hinterland. While the city forged and exploited a regional economy united by its own needs, ambitions and initiative, it maintained a strong urban economy that integrated industrial and commercial interests.

Irsigler's positive assessment of Cologne's economic position invites some comparison with the gloomier impression found in Wilhelm Schönfelder's *Die wirtschaftliche Entwicklung Kölns von 1370 bis 1513* (Köln-Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 1970), an interesting attempt to use modern economic theory and statistical techniques (especially linear regression) to examine long-term trends over the late Middle Ages. Using various printed financial accounts, especially for excise taxes, customs duties and service fees, Schönfelder estimates gross production and consumption and then constructs an index for the city's decreasing social product in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The essay is at once fascinating and frustrating. The author is imaginative in his use of limited sources and also aware of the dangers in reading too much from them. After forging ahead, however, he seems unwilling to interpret his own findings clearly. Schönfelder demonstrates intelligence at many points, but his book never really adds up to a lucid interpretation of his subject, a deficiency especially puzzling in a scholar so interested in theory and trend analysis. Irsigler corrects many of Schönfelder's errors (for example, his exaggerated view of population decline) and finds his conclusion about economic decline untenable. Far better acquaintance with the available sources, broader analytical scope, and greater cogency in addressing the issue of change relative to both earlier periods and other cities — all make Irsigler's the more impressive and credible interpretation.

In Franz Irsigler's study, then, we have the best analysis of Cologne's late medieval economy and a book worthy of the fine research tradition represented by historians like Bruno Kuske, Hektor Ammann, Edith Ennen, Hermann Kellen-

benz and Wolfgang von Stromer. The author's findings are important not only to specialists in the German field but to all Europeanists with comparative interests in urban or economic history. The monograph itself may prove too detailed for most scholars, however, even though the fine index, clear organization, careful highlighting of conclusions and excellent writing make the book accessible and readable. Non-specialists may prefer to use Irsigler's superb chapter in the impressive two-volume collection entitled *Zwei Jahrtausende Kölner Wirtschaft*, edited by Hermann Kellenbenz (Köln: Greven Verlag, 1975), I: pp. 217-319, where the author summarizes economic developments as well as the broader social and political context in exemplary fashion. He has also placed an English summary of his views in the *Journal of European Economic History*, 6 (1977): pp. 269-306. In these places the reader meets an economic historian of the first rank. Along with the Kellenbenz collection and Wolfgang Herborn's recent books on the city élites and on the wine trade, Franz Irsigler's publications, which now include an important edition of grain and bread prices in the city from 1368 to 1797, make Cologne fare very well indeed in current historiographical competition with Nuremberg.

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BOB SCRIBNER and GERHARD BENECKE, eds. — *The German Peasant War of 1525 — New Viewpoints*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1979. Pp. 206.

ROBERT H. LUTZ. — *Wer war der gemeine Mann? Der dritte Stand in der Krise des Spätmittelalters*. Munich and Vienna: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1979. Pp. 122.

The German Peasant War has acquired in the course of centuries — actually beginning soon after the event — political and ideological significance that almost overshadows the actual impact of the uprisings. Of course, it was one of the most widespread revolts of early modern Europe, also the last major one before the age of "bourgeois" revolutions and, connected in one way or another with the Reformation, something of a watershed between the medieval and modern world in Central Europe. Scholarly interest in it has coincided regularly with the turning points of German history: first "discovered" as an early pattern for a revolutionary future by the romantic democrats; then used by Engels to teach a lesson to the un-revolutionary German middle classes; and interpreted by the more or less National-Socialist *völkisch* writers of the 1930s as the *Volk's* great moment in history. After World War II the German Democratic Republic, in search of "progressive national traditions" (a commodity in short supply in the area) latched on to it and claimed that it had been the "early bourgeois revolution" in German lands, where the "real one" was missed at least until 1918. Belatedly, in reaction to this, and clearly connected to the turns in West German *Deutschlandpolitik*, the "objective" social scientists of the Federal Republic joined the discussion in an attempt to declare the democratic aspects of this "rising of the common man" as their heritage.

Although such political considerations certainly hampered the systematic study of the Peasant War, they also challenged some of the best minds to join the