

umphalism." Although the defeat of Nazi Germany put an end to that, most West German historians came to see Adolf Hitler's National Socialism not as a logical outgrowth of peculiarly German traditions but as a German variant of a larger phenomenon, totalitarianism. Dissenters, notably Fritz Fischer, argued that the longing to dominate Europe and the world had been an enduring feature of German foreign policy, from the reign of Emperor Wilhelm II (1888–1918) to Hitler.

A generation of post-1960s left-liberal "critical historians" built on such dissent. They argued that the history of the unified German nation-state that existed between 1870 and 1945 was an aberration (*ein deutscher Sonderweg*) in the context of Western European history. In Germany, "the overwhelming influence of Prussia [had] strengthened traditions of authoritarianism, illiberalism, and unpredictable aggressiveness in its foreign relations."

Rejecting this disastrous episode of German exceptionalism, later critical historians, Berger notes, turned their attention away from the nation-state and diplomatic and political history. They began to write "social history from below or gender history," focusing on "the experiences of individ-

uals or small groups within local or regional frameworks." Questions of German national identity, these scholars suggested, were not what really mattered in German history.

Then, in 1989, came the fall of the Berlin Wall. Many critical historians, fearful of a revived German nationalism, at first opposed reunification. Now, some critical historians—such as Heinrich August Winkler and Peter Brandt (son of the late chancellor Willy Brandt)—are paying renewed attention to terms such as *nation* and *patriotism*, hoping to reclaim the idea of the nation for the political Left.

With reunification, the critical historians' *Sonderweg* interpretation of German national history has been "severely shaken," Berger notes—and most seem to be slowly abandoning it. They continue to oppose any use of history writing to bolster national identity, Berger says. They look to "a mixture of regionalism and pan-Europeanism [to] prevent destructive nationalism from raising its ugly head again." Lothar Gall, the current chairman of the German Historians' Association, dismisses this danger as a left-wing fantasy. But both the critical historians and their academic critics are at the center of a debate about the meaning of German nationhood that has embroiled all of modern Germany.

India Tunes In

"Transforming Television in India" by Sevanti Ninan, in *Media Studies Journal* (Summer 1995), Columbia Univ., 2950 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10027.

Until 1991, channel surfers in India lived desperate lives: there were only two channels, both broadcast by the government-controlled network, Doordarshan. The censored news broadcasts ranged from dull to extremely dull. Today, reports Ninan, television critic for the *Hindu* in New Delhi, viewers can choose from more than a dozen channels (including CNN, the BBC, and MTV). And while Doordarshan news is still dull, there are now three independently produced alternatives (one of them carried on Doordarshan itself).

The transformation, Ninan says, is the result of two major developments: the economic reforms begun by Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao's government in 1991, which opened up India's nominally socialist economy to competition and the outside world; and the advent that same year of

transnational satellite television broadcasting in Asia with the launching of Star TV, a private television network based in Hong Kong and largely owned by Rupert Murdoch. The fare was mostly recycled American programs, Ninan says, "but to Indian television audiences . . . it was like manna from Hollywood, if not heaven."

Satellite television is costly and "still largely an urban middle-class phenomenon." Satellite TV reaches 10 million households, compared with Doordarshan's 40 million. And educated Indians in New Delhi and other cities have long relied on the country's feisty newspapers rather than TV news, Ninan points out. But with the populace 45 percent illiterate, and mostly rural, uncensored television news may eventually make a profound difference in the Indian future.