

**THE GERMANS**

by Gordon A. Craig  
Putnam's, 1982  
350 pp. \$15.95

Recent tensions between Washington and Bonn, one of our most important European allies, give new urgency to an old question: Who are these Germans? In his latest book, Craig, professor emeritus at Stanford, provides personal and scholarly answers that extend his *Germany 1866-1945* (1978) in both directions. To put the problem in perspective he has chosen two lines of inquiry: "Is there

any real connection between today's Germany and the one that I visited in 1935 or, for that matter, all the other Germanies that lie in the past—those of William II and Bismarck and Frederick II and Luther?" And perhaps more importantly: "How healthy is German democracy?"

Casting his net widely, he examines "a religious heritage that has always been ambivalent," torn between obedience and rebellion in both the Catholic and Protestant traditions. He describes the German respect for hard work and its financial rewards, tempered by a suspicion of money. And he detects a native distrust of change and nonconformity and of those who represent either, including students, women, and Jews. Disturbed by the modern German's "neurotic sensitivity to signs of economic trouble" as well as by "the increasing use of violence in domestic controversy," notable in the rise of terrorism on the extreme Left and Right in the 1970s, he is nevertheless optimistic about the future of West German democracy.

Craig acquired his reputation first as a military historian. But his literary erudition is vast, and his interpretations of cultural questions, such as "The Awful German Language," are provocative. He enlivens his discussion of the early days of the Federal Republic with quick sketches of its leading figures: Berlin's feisty mayor, Ernst Reuter (who led West German resistance to the Soviet blockade of 1948), the paternal but staunchly democratic Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, and Germany's economics wizard Ludwig Erhard (architect of the "socially responsive free market economy"). His chapters analyzing postwar literature, appraising the West German Army, and evoking the city of Berlin combine personal affinity and critical intelligence.

Unfortunately, there are significant numbers of Germans who do not appear in this volume. One searches in vain for a sympathetic portrait of the German working man, the farmer, the burgher, or the bureaucrat. And Hitler's grisly Third Reich is largely passed over, apparently out of distaste, leaving us with little sense of the immediate background of the Federal Republic.

The reader will learn more about Germans of the past than about their modern-day heirs from this book. But it is well worth making the acquaintance of those whom Craig so ably and vividly presents.

—Konrad Jarausch ('80)