BREAD AND DEMOCRACY IN GERMANY

Alexander Gerschenkron

With a new Foreword by

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FOREWORD TO THE CORNELL UNIVERSITY PRESS EDITION

Charles S. Maier

When *Bread and Democracy* was reissued in 1966, Alexander Gerschenkron admitted that a great deal of water had "run under the bridges" since his drafting of the study early in World War II. None of that water has since flowed back upstream. In 1943, Gerschenkron—then an émigré scholar at Berkeley who had left Russia as a sixteen-year-old in December 1920 and had taken his *Gymnasium* and university degrees in interwar Vienna—offered his book as one of many American works then addressing the issue of how to reconstruct Germany once Hitler was defeated. He analyzed the economic bases of the power exercised by the landlord class of eastern Germany, the so-called Prussian Junkers. Along with many other observers, Gerschenkron identified the Junkers' persistent political influence as a major impediment to liberal democracy in Germany, and he argued for reforms that would finally eliminate their "feudal" and reactionary role.

What resulted was a far greater upheaval than he had envisaged. The postwar annexation of large areas of eastern Germany by Poland and the Soviet Union, the division of the remainder of the country, and the collectivization of estates in the eastern, Soviet-occupied zone—today's German Democratic Republic—where the Junkers had dominated Prussian society and local government, effectively eliminated the landlord problem after 1945. By the time Gerschenkron's book reappeared, the Junkers had disappeared as a class, although their descendants still are heavily represented among West Germany's diplomats, bankers, learned professions, and social elites. But the problem that Gerschenkron had addressed no longer troubled policy makers, even if the author suggested his subject might usefully illuminate the role of landlord classes in developing societies. In fact, Gerschenkron under-

stood that the problems of Junker-dominated Germany had been left behind. The Junkers were an issue only for historians.

Still, *Bread and Democracy* merits publication once again. It remains an instructive historical contribution, a suggestive component of its author's intellectual development, and a revealing example of how World War II encouraged a particular agenda for social science. As an economic historian Gerschenkron was particularly intrigued by the political and economic mechanisms that had prolonged the importance of the Junkers into an era when the transformation to industrial society, so he felt, should long have undercut their influence at home. Many writers had long decried Junker power; in fact, the repeated invocations of "Prussian militarism" as one of the root evils of German development also embodied the conviction that Prussian landlords were the major impediment to German democracy. Gerschenkron's contribution was to analyze the actual strategies and arrangements the Junkers could exploit to assure their continuing role as grain farmers, when market considerations alone should have long undercut their prosperity. His diagnosis fit a continuing tradition of interpretation that argued Germany had remained subject to "feudal" or "precapitalist" influences long after it should have adopted the democratic political habits that allegedly accompany industrialization. But whereas most commentators had focused on the Junkers' role in public administration and the military as the source of their baleful power, Gerschenkron probed the shelter provided by agrarian protection or tariffs on grain imports. He applied political economy to history.

The reader unfamiliar with Gerschenkron's work may find helpful some initial coordinates. *Bread and Democracy* deserves scrutiny not merely for what it explained about the history of Germany but as a document of intellectual history in its own right. Almost every non-German scholar of the Reich chose to address the same set of questions, first during World War I, then even more urgently after Hitler came to power in 1933: Where and how had Germany gone wrong? What influences led it to behave so much more aggressively than other western

states? Why was liberal democracy so feeble an impulse? Why, in short, had Germany diverged from the liberal and peaceful course chosen by Britain, France, and the United States? Why had it chosen what has since been called a *Sonderweg* or separate path?

Gerschenkron's answers were persuasive in some respects, overdrawn in others. Since he wrote, not only have his answers been contested but the very questions have been criticized. Even at the time Gerschenkron wrote, many observers believed the Junkers were being ascribed too evil a role and too great a historical responsibility. The National Socialists, they argued, assembled a plebeian cohort of resentful war veterans, second-rate intellectuals, and precarious white-collar employees or shopkeepers. They drew only very belated support from the self-assured Prussian conservative elite, which, in fact, then became one of the social bases of the German Resistance. Contemporary historians have also wondered whether the Junkers' social and political influence was indeed so different from that of landed elites elsewhere.

Gerschenkron's work also deserves placement within his own evolving intellectual agenda. First at Berkeley, and then at Harvard from 1948 on, he would become one of the most influential scholars and teachers of economic history in the United States. His broad-ranging essays explored the technical difficulties of assigning numerical indexes to economic growth, the impediments to Italian, German, and Russian development, the role of such intangibles as national values, and even Russian literature. Although he was not a "cliometrician" in the strictest sense—he did not rely on regression analysis to test models of growth or returns—his sensitivity to the analysis of index numbers was invaluable for students who went on to cliometric work. He welcomed the new economic history as "far and away the best thing that has happened to the discipline in generations."[1] Moreover, his testing of different explanations, his successive weighing of alternative chains of causation, would become the hallmark of the most sophisti-

[1] Alexander Gerschenkron, *Europe in the Russian Mirror* (London, 1970), p. 106.

cated social science in the 1960s and after. Everyone who heard his lectures or just dipped into his essays encountered a scholar of probing intelligence and immense cultivation (which, to be sure, he liked to display so generously). By the 1960s his model of how the process of economic development changed from early to late industrializers had become widely influential within the social sciences. In retrospect, *Bread and Democracy* can be seen to have raised a more inclusive set of issues concerning belated development, which became Gerschenkron's central theme. What were the economic and political costs of late development? What were the advantages? From the deformations of Prussian development—and of the Russian case, which Gerschenkron had always in mind—a powerful general model could be generated.

Gerschenkron revealed, it must be admitted, considerable defensiveness about his own formulations. He certainly liked to quarrel, in text, footnotes, and, according to diverse reporters, in seminar. The targets of his dissent were sometimes told they really should have known better; whether this was meant to soften the critique is unclear. So far as can be discerned, he rarely conceded a point. Strangely enough, Gerschenkron produced no written synthesis to round off his brilliance and erudition. *Bread and Democracy* and two published sets of lectures—one set drawn together as an episode in early twentieth-century Austrian economic history, another concerning the lessons for Western theories of economic development to be drawn from Russian history—remain the only book-length studies.[2] In place of the magnum opus, his students had a demanding course on the methods and results of European economic history, and his readers must content themselves with two volumes of essays that say more than many books.[3] *Bread*

[2] Alexander Gerschenkron, *An Economic Spurt That Failed: Four Lectures in Austrian History* (Princeton, N.J., 1977); *Europe in the Russian Mirror.*

[3] *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective: A Book of Essays* (Cambridge, Mass., 1962); *Continuity in History and Other Essays* (Cambridge, Mass., 1968). Gerschenkron also published a series of papers, *Economic Relations with the USSR* (New York, 1945); the collection *Mercator Gloriosus and Other Essays* (1973); and a series of technical studies published by the RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, Calif.: *A Dollar Index of Soviet Electric Power Output* (1954), with the assistance of E. Marbury; *A Dollar Index of Soviet Iron and Steel Output, 1927/28–1937* (1953), with Nancy Nimitz; *A Dollar Index of Soviet*

and Democracy was a way-station on an intellectual journey of explorations, hypotheses, and skirmishes. The occasion of its reprinting raises the question how it logically related to Alexander Gerschenkron's continuing inquiries, even if originally it was conceived as just his contribution to the war effort.

How well has Gerschenkron's analysis held up? How valid was it at the time? Gerschenkron was certainly not the first author to lament the role of the Junkers. Innumerable commentators had described them as the bulwark of the Prussian military state.[4] Gerschenkron's study emphasized how resilient a social formation they represented. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the East Elbian landlords consolidated a symbiotic relationship with their ambitious Hohenzollern princes, staffing a rudimentary bureaucracy and procuring and commanding peasant soldiers so that the small, rather poorly endowed North German state could field a disciplined army far larger than those of the other second-rank powers of the day. Drawing on the Junkers, relying on adroit changes of alliance, timely territorial acquisitions, and administrative rationalization, Frederick William, the Great Elector (1640–88), and his successors through Frederick the Great (1740–86) built Prussian power.

In return the landlords were granted increasing control over their tenants: they could tighten the bonds of peasant serfdom and absorb increasing shares of common land or peasant fields. This trend was, in fact, part of the absolutely fundamental divergence within early modern European history. Even as serfdom was increasingly being converted into

Machinery Output, 1927–28 to 1937 (1951), with Alexander Erlich; *A Dollar Index of Soviet Petroleum Output, 1927–28 to 1937* (1952), with Nancy Nimitz; and *Soviet Heavy Industry: A Dollar Index of Output, 1927/28–1937* (1954).

[4] Perhaps the most interesting recent treatment of Junker society has been Otto Büsch, *Militärsystem und Sozialleben im alten Preussen, 1713–1807* (Berlin, 1962). See, too, Hans Rosenberg, *Bureaucracy, Aristocracy, Autocracy: The Prussian Experience, 1660–1815* (Cambridge, Mass., 1955); the brief survey by Hanna Schissler, "The Junkers: Notes on the Social and Historical Significance of the Agrarian Elite in Prussia," in Robert G. Moeller, ed., *Peasants and Lords in Modern Germany: Recent Studies in Agricultural History* (Boston and London, 1984), pp. 24–51; and Robert M. Berdahl, *The Politics of the Prussian Nobility* (Princeton, N.J., 1988).

commercial tenancy in western Europe after the close of the Middle Ages, the realms east of the Elbe underwent the opposite process. Landlords increased their control over local peasantries in Prussia, Mecklenburg, Poland, Russia, and the Habsburg lands. In contrast to trends in the west, the landlords converted rents into hereditary labor services. The reasons were complicated and varied: nobles sought control over the grain that was shipped to western European consumers from Baltic ports; their monarchs purchased noble support for the growth of central state power by conceding ever more jurisdiction over the land, their peasants' labor-power, and their diminished liberties.

The degree of subjection varied: Prussian serfs could never be bought or sold with the ease of Russian serfs. They remained usually "bound to the land"—that is, the appurtenance of an estate and village—even when defined rigorously as "bodily property" (*Leibeigentum*) and not merely as "subject by virtue of inherited status" (*Erbuntertänig*). The Junkers annexed less of their hapless peasants' fields in Prussia than in the enclave of Mecklenburg on the Baltic, where no effective sovereign prince limited landlord acquisitiveness. The Prussian peasantry's obligation to labor on landlord demesnes (the land cultivated for the direct account of the estate owner) varied from fourteen days per year to an average of three or four days per week. This latter obligation was comparatively heavy, though less rigorous than in Denmark and some Habsburg regions. But in addition the seigneur could sometimes conscript his peasants' unmarried children for work in the fields or household at very low wages, insist on such extra service as carting or estate maintenance, and also extract rent in money or kind for the peasant's house, garden, and grazing rights. Yet there were disadvantages as well. As population grew, freely contracted labor might actually be cheaper and more plentiful.[5] Moreover, estates that came with bound peasants

[5] William H. Hagen suggests that the peasant standard of living remained robust before emancipation despite the more general increase of population, pauperism, and vagabondage in late eighteenth-century Germany. Proletarianization came after emancipation. See "Working for the Junker: The Standard of Living of Manorial La-

were defined as noble, which impeded their sale to a growing number of prosperous but nontitled would-be purchasers. Enlightenment concepts of human dignity, finally, made hereditary subjection morally offensive. By the late eighteenth century the winds of reform were becoming stronger; the end of seigneurial privileges in France seemed to have contributed to the success of French armies; and peasant emancipation—pioneered on the extensive crown lands of Prussia—was decreed for the kingdom as a whole after its defeat by Napoleon.[6]

Outside Silesia and East Prussia the average Junker was hardly a great landlord. The Polish or Bohemian or Magyar noble might own thousands of acres (although many were land-poor). The Junker tended more often to own two hundred fifty to five hundred, although some consolidated holdings of manors and villages could be much larger. To a degree, this Prussian squirearchy could compound its influence by extensive cousinage: the Arnims or Bülows or Kleists collectively might control a dozen or more estates and their attached villages in Pomerania and Brandenburg, East and West Prussia. At the end of World War I these extensive family networks took advertisements in their favored conservative newspaper, the *Kreuzzeitung*, to publish lists of their sons from their dispersed villages who had fallen on the eastern and western fronts "for king and fatherland."

Individually the Junker was rarely a magnate. Collectively his class never had the ties with a major commercial elite, the political acumen, and the freedom from foreign invaders enjoyed by the British landed elite. While the English aristocracy finally prevailed against the Stuart dynasty's royal ambitions in the great contests of the seventeenth century, the Junkers failed to impose any equivalent of the oligarchic British parlia-

borers in Brandenburg, 1584–1810," *Journal of Modern History* 58 (March 1986): 143–158. For pre-reform conditions see also Friedrich-Wilhelm Henning, *Dienste und Abgaben der Bauern im 18. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart, 1969).

[6] Christof Dipper, *Die Bauernbefreiung in Deutschland, 1790–1850* (Stuttgart, 1980), pp. 50–69. For a general synthesis see Jerome Blum, *The End of the Old Order in Rural Europe* (Princeton, N.J., 1978).

ment which, in its turn, might have served as an instrument of wider democratization two centuries later. In fact, the Great Elector rode roughshod over the decentralized Prussian provincial diets and had their periodically refractory leaders arrested. Nonetheless the Junkers' military role and their power as landlords were strengthened by Frederick the Great and survived even the emancipation of the serfs in 1807. The peasants who gained legal freedom soon became agricultural laborers, as dependent in fact as earlier they had been in law. The Junkers remained county executives and justices of the peace with substantial first-instance jurisdiction. Until 1872 their domains carried important rights of village governance. Until 1918 they could place their land in an entailed trust to ensure it would remain intact in family possession. They remained the backbone of civil service and army. The local Protestant parsons were largely under their thumb and justified the social hierarchy. All in all, they remained one of the most cohesive and durable of European landed elites. This tenacity both intrigued and appalled Gerschenkron.

Other authors had suggested why the end of serfdom was not a fundamental blow to the Junkers' social power. They explained that at emancipation, only the most prosperous enfranchised serfs were given parcels of land as their own. Peasants' debts accumulated; their children multiplied; farms were foreclosed; and by mid-century a class of village farm laborers worked effectively under the control of local landlords even if theoretically free to come and go and marry.[7] In the eastern provinces of Prussia the even poorer, ethnically Polish villagers came to comprise the farm labor force, and the upholders of Germanness had to rely on Slavic manpower (somewhat as conservative agriculturalists in the southwestern United States have depended upon Hispanic families to cultivate their fields). But by this time in the latter nineteenth century Junkers formed a diverse society: some were hidebound reaction-

[7] Walter M. Simon, *The Failure of the Prussian Reform Movement, 1807–1819* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1955). For another classic nineteenth-century description of the post-emancipation East Elbian labor system, see Max Weber, *Die Verhältnisse der Landarbeiter im ostelbischen Deutschland*, vol. 55 of *Schriften des Vereins für Sozialpolitik* (Leipzig, 1892).

aries, others were cultivated and even backed liberal trends. As a class they found their Turgenev or Chekov in Theodor Fontane, who admired their heritage even as their critic and whose *Wanderings through the Mark of Brandenburg* provides the best picture of their values, their landscape, and the impact of early industrial development.[8]

Gerschenkron really began his analysis after Bismarck's unification of Germany around the armature of the Prussian state in 1870–71. The constitution of the new German Empire preserved Junker preponderance through several mechanisms. Within the state of Prussia, which comprised about two-thirds of the new Germany, an indirect parliamentary suffrage skewed toward wealth warded off the encroachment of the Junkers' political enemies. The upper house of peers also included many of their number, and the holding-company structure of the national government effectively retained in Prussian institutions the levers of executive (and military) power. The new emperor of Germany was also king of Prussia, surrounded by courtiers and military advisers drawn largely from the landed elite. These results did not reconcile the Junkers to the new state, which many felt still embodied too many compromises with liberal tendencies. Deserting their earlier free-trade liberalism, and organized within the Prussian Conservative party, many Junkers remained uncooperative until the end of the 1870s. By then the adverse economic trends that Gerschenkron details made them far more compliant, even as Bismarck decided he wanted to consolidate their political support.

Bismarck could not control world-market forces, and from the 1870s on these seemed more threatening than mere politics to the Junkers. The expansion of world grain output that followed the American Civil War, the settlement of the Canadian and U.S. prairies, and the introduction of mechanical combines, as well as the long slow decline in agrarian prices that constituted the so-called Great Depression of 1873–96,

[8] Theodor Fontane, *Wanderungen durch die Mark Brandenburg*, 4 vols. (East Berlin, 1987).

undercut the economic viability of the Junker estates. Many faced bankruptcy.

The solution they called for was a tariff on grain—relatively moderate in 1879 but significantly increased in 1902. By themselves the Junkers probably could not have secured this result. Working-class representatives from the cities had no interest in increasing the bread bills of their constituents, half of whose wages went to food. Nor did urban employers want to have to pay higher wages to cover higher bread prices. But since the proliferating industrial enterprises of the Empire also felt badly squeezed by the economic downturns of the 1870s, the government could engineer a log-rolling compromise. By the end of the 1870s Bismarck found his own advantage in overseeing this pro-tariff coalition of "rye and iron." It freed him in the legislature from dependency on the Liberals, who had backed unification but always wanted more of a parliamentary role than he wished to concede. With the tariff of 1879 and the simultaneous turn toward conservative (now Junker and heavy industry) and Catholic Center party support, Bismarck renegotiated the fundamental political alignments of the Empire.

Gerschenkron analyzed the political effects of this tariff bloc. He also showed the mechanisms that augmented it. The tariffs did not provide sufficient compensation and absolute security. Indeed, in the early 1890s Bismarck's successor as chancellor, Admiral Leo Caprivi, sought to reverse political alignments and lower tariffs through reciprocal trade agreements. His policy sent Junker politicians into a frenzy of organization; they formed the Union of Agriculturalists as a modern pressure group, embraced an antisemitic platform that blamed their woes on city sharpies and Jewish speculators, and helped force Caprivi's ouster. They sought a state monopoly on grain imports with a high guaranteed price that would steadily prop up the price of domestic wheat and rye —the so-called Kanitz proposal discussed by Gerschenkron as emblematic of Junker efforts. Blaming depressed prices on the speculative effects of commodities trading, Junker representa-

tives also managed to suppress the futures market for a decade. They stalled the development of the major inter-river, east-west canal system, which they believed would encourage further industrialization of their eastern regions and drain their peasant labor force to the factories.[9] Finally, they exploited the system of "import certificates," whose mechanism Gerschenkron lovingly analyzes. The result was that German East Elbian producers were extensively subsidized by the remainder of the country to continue production of expensive wheat and of a rye crop that was less preferred for domestic consumption but was exported as animal fodder. How much more rational it would have been, Gerschenkron suggests, to have phased out this production, to have approached the far lower British percentage of agricultural contribution to the national economy, and to have converted those agrarian enterprises which continued to meat and dairy specialization. Politically such a transformation would have meant the prosperity of democratic yeoman peasants and the decline of arrogant, militarist landlords. German politics might then have evolved toward the more liberal and less xenophobic patterns of Scandinavia and Britain.

Gerschenkron was not the only proponent of this view. In World War I the Austrian economist Joseph Schumpeter had argued that "imperialism"—which he narrowly defined as the economically unmotivated impulse to national expansion—characterized protectionist Austria and Germany but not free-trade Britain. For imperialism in his sense depended upon the persistence of a militarist or quasi-feudal elite. It was eroded by the spread of industrial capitalism, with its continuing reliance on sober calculation and rationality; businessmen gained more by peaceful international trade than by foreign domination. It was precisely the tariff, Schumpeter argued, that permitted the survival of an imperialist, "precapitalist" elite. Im-

[9] For these conflicts see Kenneth D. Barkin, *The Controversy over German Industrialization, 1890–1902* (Chicago, 1970). Also J. Alden Nicholls, *Germany after Bismarck* (Cambridge, Mass., 1959), and J. G. H. Roehl, *Germany without Bismarck* (London, 1968).

perialism was the offspring of protectionism.[10] The American economic thinker Thorstein Veblen proposed a similar theory under the impact of World War I. Veblen felt that Germany had "borrowed" the technology of the industrial revolution from Britain. The Reich had industrialized parasitically and certainly so rapidly that it could not internalize the peaceful habits of industrial culture which the British had developed through two centuries. Veblen too argued that protectionism kept a precapitalist elite powerful and intact.[11]

Hence a generation before Gerschenkron took up the Junker problem, theorists had postulated an integral connection between German authoritarian expansionism and tariff protection, although Gerschenkron in World War II did not refer to these explanations proposed during the earlier conflict. Nor did Gerschenkron cite the major historical study of the German historian Eckart Kehr, published a dozen years earlier, which carefully explained how the protective tariff and the building of a challenging battle fleet were part of a reactionary policy package designed to keep Germany's elites united and to ward off democratization.[12] (He did cite two of Kehr's articles.) Gerschenkron was discreet about these predecessors; perhaps he considered their arguments too tangential to his very specific focus on the Junker problem.

Gerschenkron did not end his analysis with the ramifications of protectionism. He continued the inquiry to ask why the German Revolution of November 1918 had not destroyed Junker power. The right to entail estates was removed; hereditary titles became merely decorative; the rigged Prussian suf-

[10] See Joseph Schumpeter, "Imperialism," in *Imperialism and Social Classes* (New York, 1955). Schumpeter taught at Harvard from 1932 to his death in early 1950, about a year and a half after Gerschenkron's arrival. The latter dissented from Schumpeter's emphasis on the entrepreneur's role in economic growth. He also enjoyed recounting the inglorious tale (now available in several Austrian financial histories) of Schumpeter's brief, embarrassing career as Austrian finance minister in 1918–19. Schumpeter, named by the socialists as a nonpartisan candidate because he allegedly supported nationalization of the major coal and steel firm in Austria, the Alpin-Montan-Gesellschaft, preemptively sold a controlling stake in its shares to an Italian financial group, thereby shielding the combine from state takeover.

[11] Thorstein Veblen, *Imperial Germany and the Industrial Revolution* (New York, 1916).

[12] Eckart Kehr, *Schlachtflottenbau und Parteipolitik, 1894–1901* (Berlin, 1930).

frage and Prussian house of peers were abolished. Proportional representation gave working-class voters the Prussian legislative delegates as well as the Reichstag representation they warranted. By 1927 the last official role of the estate owner in local administrative arrangements was removed. Nonetheless, the Junkers did not wither away as a sociopolitical force. Gerschenkron saw the major reason in the Social Democratic failure to push through a thorough land reform that would have divided the large estates. He also explained how the hyperinflation of the early 1920s wiped out much of the real burden of Junker mortgage debt (although they would quickly fall into short-term, high-interest indebtedness after 1924). Farmers won renewed protection in 1925, even if it did not offset the steep decline of agricultural prices. A massive program of expensive farm subsidies (so-called Eastern Aid or *Osthilfe*) kept the Junkers out of bankruptcy as agricultural prices again skidded in the late 1920s and more acutely in the Depression. The election of Marshall Paul von Hindenburg as federal president in 1925 (he was foresightedly presented with an East Elbian estate) preserved the Junkers' entrée to the highest political level. No one fared well in the Depression, but the Junkers managed to shield themselves from its worst effects.

The final part of Gerschenkron's book concerned Nazi rule and the remedies he envisaged for the postwar era. Gerschenkron understood that despite the Junkers' nominal enthusiasm for a peasant estate and agricultural autarky, their political power had declined under the Nazis. In effect, the old trade-off between Hohenzollern and estate owners was renewed. The landlords kept control of their estates, and despite many promises of "settlement" and aid for the "Reich agrarian estate," peasant proprietorship did not increase.[13] But the Prussian elite lost its influential role in such political redoubts as the General Staff and the Foreign Ministry. De-

[13] For a recent treatment of Nazi agricultural policy see J. E. Farquharson, "The Agrarian Policy of National Socialist Germany," in Moeller, *Peasants and Lords in Modern Germany*, pp. 233–59, and Farquharson, *The Plough and the Swastika: The NSDAP and Agriculture in Germany, 1928–1945* (Beverly Hills, Calif., 1976).

spite these setbacks to the landed class, Gerschenkron could nonetheless argue plausibly that after the war the persisting problem of the Junkers' landed hegemony must still be resolved. The last chapters propose the lineaments of reform he thought necessary: confiscation of great estates, and diminution of the agricultural sector as a whole from the roughly 20 percent of the active population it comprised to the less than 10 percent of Britain. The underlying message was that "preservation of the Junkers and the establishment of a lasting democracy in Germany and of peace in the world are inherently incompatible. Preservation of the Junkers means autarky, and autarky in Germany means war" (p. 183).

Gerschenkron's analysis remains persuasive in some respects, weaker in others. The strongest parts of the book are clearly the discussions of agricultural protectionism, its impediments to farm modernization, and its role in preserving Junker influence. But almost every country with the exception of Great Britain, which had eliminated tariffs in 1846, returned to tariff protection in the late nineteenth century: Italy and France, Austria-Hungary, Russia, and the United States. Why in Germany alone did the results seem so fatal? Gerschenkron might have answered: in France, despite a similar convergence of agrarian and landed elites, the legislature elected by universal suffrage was far more powerful; in the United States, midwestern farmers not Southern cotton growers sought the tariff; in Italy, the wheat growers of the South were woven into a complex system of patronage supervised by the Left, not the Right. But the question implicit in Gerschenkron's inquiry was not how each country had been different but why Germany had diverged from *all* the others. Ascribing a special path to Germany opened up some comparative dimensions but forestalled others.

Powerful and conservative though they were, moreover, the Prussian landlords were probably less homogenous a class than the book proposed. Gerschenkron focused on their role during their most reactionary period; he was not interested in the question how East Prussia, for instance, might remain a foyer of liberalism into the 1870s. He did not really seek to