

Overall, the editors fail to produce a well-integrated volume, and have left out some important representative developments such as molecular biology. Nevertheless, their collection represents a fresh and daring effort to explore the true impact of the Cultural Revolution on Chinese science, technology, and medicine. It brings out some new and inspiring papers and should stimulate more comprehensive and more profound investigations.

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Das Motorrad: Ein deutscher Sonderweg in die automobile Gesellschaft.

By Frank Steinbeck. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2012. Pp. 346. €57.

German motorization blossomed with the motorcycle. This finding is the starting point of Frank Steinbeck's study, based on his doctoral dissertation. Between 1926 and 1960 more motorcycles than automobiles were driven in Germany. In no other European country did the motorcycle play such a dominant role in mass motorization. In the 1920s there was also a high incidence of motorcycle use in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, and the British motorcycle industry was long considered a role model by German motorbike manufacturers. However, the British and Dutch started driving more automobiles in the 1930s. Only in Germany did the motorcycle keep its position as the dominant means of personal transportation until the end of the Second World War, and Steinbeck sets out to reveal the reasons for this special development. The three chapters of his study follow the political developments in the German Empire and the Weimar Republic to the Nazi period. In addition, a brief excursus summarizes postwar developments in West and East Germany.

Steinbeck argues that persistent low incomes in large sectors of the German population, high fees (e.g., taxation and fuel costs), and finally, from 1928, favorable legal regulations (partial abolition of taxes and compulsory driving licenses) contributed to the widespread use of motorcycles, particularly those with small, 200-ccm engines (p. 310). These three factors describe the general scene, but they do not satisfactorily answer the question of why Germans embraced the motorcycle as their primary means of mass motorization. Furthermore, Steinbeck's study does not answer the question of why German car manufacturers did not develop cheaper car models in the 1920s, and why the automobile was perceived as an upper-class luxury until the 1930s. Here, a discussion of the German Sonderweg

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(“special path”), as mentioned in the study’s subtitle, would have been helpful. “Sonderweg” is a theory in German historiography that explains the unique German course from aristocracy to democracy. Eminent historians such as Fritz Fischer and Hans-Ulrich Wehler argued that Germany only partially modernized: industrial modernity was not followed by political change; instead, traditional reactionary elites maintained power up to 1945.

Despite the book’s subtitle, Steinbeck explicitly states that he does not want to engage with this discussion (p. 11). Instead, in his conclusion, he rejects interpretations of other mobility scholars that the conservative elites hampered German automobilization (p. 314). To support his argument, Steinbeck points to conservative anti-noise campaigns which condemned motorcycle use, and argues that German elites did not promote the motorcycle for the masses either. However, as sound-study scholars investigating symbolisms of sound and listening practices of elites and subordinates have shown, conservative noise-abatement movements did not simply follow a rational discourse. Upper-class anti-noise campaigners equally criticized the diabolic bang of automobiles—automobiles that were predominantly owned and used by these same campaigners.

Beyond the question of the German Sonderweg, Steinbeck does not engage with other recent scholarship in the history of technology. What role did mediators like motor clubs and journals play in articulating what they perceived as the motorcyclists’ interests? What did the history of motorcycles-in-use look like? What can the self-repair practice of motorcyclists tell us about motorcycle culture and the construction of manhood in the interwar years? Because of his lack of critical historiographical discussion, Steinbeck does not go beyond the existing literature on German motorization, such as the work of Heidrun Edelmann or Christoph Maria Merki, frequently acknowledged in the author’s footnotes. What Steinbeck adds are numerous details on motorcycles. Thus, if you are looking for exhaustive statistical data or an in-depth account of legal and technical regulations, you will find some interesting pieces of information about motorcycles in Germany. However, Steinbeck’s study will not help you to better understand why motorcycles dominated the motorization process in Germany up until the 1960s.

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