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Christoph STUDD, Lothar Bucher (1817–1892). Ein politisches Leben zwischen Revolution und Staatsdienst, Göttingen (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht) 1992, 390 p. (Schriftenreihe der Historischen Kommission bei der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 47).

Of all the gray eminences associated with Otto Prince von Bismarck, Lothar Bucher has remained one of the most obscure, even though *Gedanken und Erinnerungen* might never have been published without Bucher's efforts. From the beginning of his career as a small-town judge in East Prussia to his end as a publicity-shy Prussian Privy Councilor in the Foreign Ministry, Bucher led an unflamboyant life that nevertheless was tossed and given new course by the momentous events of his time.

It is this confrontation between a somewhat pedestrian man and the drama of change around him that makes Bucher's life – or rather his »political life« and thoughts, as Studt's subtitle emphasizes – worth studying. Catapulted into mass politics through his election to the Prussian National Assembly in 1848, Bucher became increasingly radicalized and joined those deputies who resisted the reactionary course of the royal government by calling for a »tax refusal« by citizens. The government was able to collect taxes, the revolutionary parliament disbanded, and Bucher returned to his job as a provincial junior magistrate. Vindictively, the government also prosecuted Bucher and others for treason over the call for a tax strike, and Bucher fled the country. Without this event, Studt believes, »it is doubtful if anybody would have heard from ... Lothar Bucher ever again.« (p. 337).

Like many other exiles after the collapse of the 1848 revolutions in Central Europe, Bucher wound up in London, where he became the British correspondent for the widely-read *National-Zeitung*. In this capacity, he spent several years studying and reporting on a country that had held a model character for many educated Germans. Bucher's enthusiasm for his host country began to pale somewhat over the nearly 15 years he spent there. His disillusionment with the reality of parliamentary life was particularly telling and came to be shared by many in his generation of Germans in the sobered era of *Realpolitik*.

Able finally to return to Prussia because of the amnesty following the death of Frederick William IV., Bucher befriended Lassalle for a time, but was forced to abandon him or be fired from his job with a Berlin news service. He was also a *großdeutsch* spokesman at a time when such views were becoming increasingly rare in North Germany. In his late forties, still lacking an assured career and future, Bucher cast about for a way to reestablish himself as a lawyer. Instead, his enquiries landed him an appointment in the political section of the Prussian Foreign Office, where his reputation for disillusionment with 1848 and English liberalism could be useful to Bismarck.

Studd does a commendable job of disentangling Bucher's career in that office from the rumors and claims of contemporaries, memoirists and other biographers. Such major issues as the Schleswig-Holstein question, the Hohenzollern candidacy for the throne of Spain, the writing of the constitution for the North German Confederation, alliance feelers with England and the Socialist Law, in all of which Bucher has been claimed to have been deeply involved, are as carefully analyzed as the records allow (although Studt admits measuring Bucher's influence is not always easy).

The major turns in Prussia-Germany's policies after 1879 appear to have made Bucher less and less useful, although he hung on to his job through the mid-1880s and remained in touch with Bismarck, including to the end of his life his editorial work on the retired chancellor's memoirs.

Studd clearly avoids psychohistorical methods in evaluating Bucher's strange career, just as he eschews the simple moralism of condemning what many contemporaries regarded as a sell-out. Instead, he depicts Bucher from the start as swept up into the events of 1848 and derailed from an otherwise quiet life by the post-revolutionary reaction. Studt finds the key to Bucher's world-view in his faith in a steady, but slow amelioration.

Thus Bucher did not abandon his admiration for England as expressed in the early 1850s,

but merely tempered it with insight into the short-term self-interest of British politicians; did not give up faith that socialist improvements would lift the workers, but abandoned Lassalle's hope that they would occur in one lifetime; and did not become a conservative to work with Bismarck, but rather saw in the Iron Chancellor someone who shared his view of secular and slow realization of historical change. In the end it may have been his experiences in England that most shaped this outlook: »Bucher had brought from England the firm conviction that everything reasonable would win out in the end. But it would take long years, decades, perhaps even centuries. He rejected revolution, revolt and forced introduction of ideas whose time had not yet come« (p. 345).

It is precisely Bucher's English experience, and his disillusionment with foreign (especially liberal) models that makes him in many ways such a characteristic figure of his generation of German educated men. He was a revolutionary leader who came to mistrust revolution; a nationalist who mistrusted *kleindeutsch* chauvinism; a constitutionalist who mistrusted special-interest politics; and a journalist who worried about how »public opinion« could be manipulated. In contrast to Studt's fairly positive depiction, one must also insist that he was a fatalist who was finally content to leave the fate of his country in the hands of a »strong man.«

Studt's scrupulously researched and carefully written monograph, originally a Bonn dissertation supervised by Klaus Hildebrand, clearly transcends the average effort of this kind. It deservedly revives for our attention a life more interesting for what it tells us about the environment around it than for the personality that lived it.

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Wolfgang J. MOMMSEN, *Das Ringen um den nationalen Staat. Die Gründung und der innere Ausbau des Deutschen Reiches unter Otto von Bismarck 1850 bis 1890*, Berlin (Propyläen) 1993, 845 p. (Propyläen Geschichte Deutschlands, 7/1).

La question des origines du Sonderweg qui mène l'État national allemand au nazisme et à l'effondrement de 1945 continue à obséder les historiens allemands et constitue le fil directeur de l'important ouvrage que W.J. Mommsen consacre à la fondation du Reich allemand et à ses vingt premières années (1850–1890), période dominée par la personnalité de Bismarck. Ce premier volume d'une histoire du Kaiserreich répond de manière relativement nuancée à cette question fondamentale en faisant le bilan des aspects positifs et négatifs. Contrairement à Thomas Nipperdey qui conclut de manière plutôt positive dans sa grande œuvre sur l'Allemagne au XIX^e siècle, Mommsen insiste surtout sur les aspects négatifs et son bilan, même s'il refuse de faire du Kaiserreich une »préhistoire« du III^e Reich et affirme qu'il constitue »une époque historique propre ayant sa propre valeur«, apparaît lourd pour l'avenir. La longue introduction qui replace le Kaiserreich dans la perspective de l'histoire allemande note qu'il a posé les bases de l'ordre économique et social de l'Allemagne moderne d'aujourd'hui, mais insiste surtout sur sa responsabilité dans la catastrophe de 1914 et de 1945. Alors que l'œuvre de Nipperdey se voulait exhaustive et embrassait de manière thématique tous les aspects de l'histoire allemande, Mommsen interprète les réalités sociales, économiques, culturelles et politiques en fonction du politique, ce qui lui permet de bien mettre en valeur ses principales thèses.

Mommsen montre que l'Allemagne de 1871 n'est pas le résultat d'une politique d'unité nationale de Bismarck définie une fois pour toutes, mais le fruit d'une politique pragmatique qui cherche une solution de la »question allemande« conforme aux intérêts conservateurs et à la Prusse. Il s'agit, pour Bismarck, de canaliser au profit de la Prusse et d'affaiblir un mouvement national auquel il n'est pas possible de s'opposer. Mommsen insiste sur le fait que, même après 1865, Bismarck n'envisage pas l'unité allemande par la force, mais réagit aux événements en pesant les alternatives possibles, avec le souci de tenir compte des puissances