

September 1998

Review of *Antisemitism and Xenophobia in Germany after Unification*. Herman Kurthen, Werner Bergmann and Rainer Erb (Eds.). Reviewed by Frank Hirtz, University of California, Davis.

Frank Hirtz
University of California, Davis

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw>



Part of the Social Work Commons

Recommended Citation

Hirtz, Frank (1998) "Review of *Antisemitism and Xenophobia in Germany after Unification*. Herman Kurthen, Werner Bergmann and Rainer Erb (Eds.). Reviewed by Frank Hirtz, University of California, Davis." *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*: Vol. 25: Iss. 3, Article 10.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15453/0191-5096.2512>

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol25/iss3/10>

This Book Review is brought to you by the Western Michigan University School of Social Work. For more information, please contact wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu.



Book Reviews

Herman Kurthen, Werner Bergmann and Rainer Erb (Eds.), *Antisemitism and Xenophobia in Germany after Unification*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997. \$ 65 hardcover, \$ 29.95 papercover.

This book sets out to describe and explain from a multidisciplinary perspective the wave of xenophobic violence, the electoral success of far-right parties and the upsurge of aggressive antisemitic incidents between 1991 and 1994 in Germany. And this is exactly what the book provides in its thirteen chapters, broadly subdivided into three areas of concern; namely, general facts and findings about antisemitism and xenophobia, a description of the groups and organizations promoting antisemitism and xenophobia and the reactions to antisemitism and xenophobia by the wider populace as well as the groups targeted by hate groups.

The different chapters, which are well written and balanced, cover a large field but can also be read alone. They place the debate within an international context and discuss empirical and methodological issues. The book also provides a calendar of antisemitic and xenophobic incidents between 1989 and 1994, and contains a very detailed bibliography.

A particular strength of the book is its theoretical rigor and well as its thorough discussion of the political and philosophical origins of antisemitism and xenophobia in Germany. Although the concepts of antisemitism and xenophobia are closely linked, the book makes an interesting distinction between them pointing out that antisemitic behavior is particularly virulent among hate groups who target Jews partly because their acts are a deliberate reaction against Germany's laws which proscribe antisemitism. While the book suggests that antisemitism is not widespread among the German population, it claims that xenophobia is common and that a general dislike of foreigners is widespread. As the number of migrants from other countries has increased, attitudes towards them have hardened. Negative feelings have been exacerbated by economic adversity, unemployment and the

exploitation of popular concerns by the media. These negative attitudes are not, however, generally directed against Jews.

The issues raised in this book are not only interesting and enlightening from an academic point of view but from a public policy point of view as well. There is real danger that unless decisive action is taken, hate groups will exert greater influence in the future. The book deserves to be widely read. It is a very valuable resource for anyone interested in antisemitic and xenophobia, the resurgence of neo-fascist and other right wing ideologies in Germany.

Frank Hirtz

University of California, Davis

Juan F. Perea, *Immigrants Out: The New Nativism and the Anti-Immigrant Impulse in the United States*. New York: New York University Press, 1997. \$ 19.95 papercover.

The debate over U.S. immigration policy is complex, but in essence, it is a debate between the "admissionists" and the "restrictionists." The former want immigration to be increased, or at least kept at its present level. The latter, conversely, want it reduced. As the debate between these two sides heats up, recent surveys show that a growing number of Americans are siding with the restrictionists. It is evident, moreover, that the leaders of the restrictionist movement are becoming more vocal and are waging a well-funded and highly-organized campaign to curtail immigration and to make English the nation's official language. There are indications, too, that the intensification of this campaign has coincided with a rise in prejudice and hostility against foreigners. In light of these trends, some admissionists claim, the U.S. is experiencing a resurgence of nativism.

That is the thesis of this book, a collection of essays edited by a law professor at the University of Florida. An admissionist, he assembled the book to express his dismay over the most salient victory (to date) of the restrictionist movement: the passage in California of Proposition 187, which, among other things, seeks to deny many public services to illegal aliens. The editor sees the arguments behind this proposal, and the other goals of the restrictionists, as reminiscent of the anti-immigrant rhetoric of