

Industrielle Revolution in Deutschland: Regionen als Wachstumsmotoren [Industrial revolution in Germany: Regions as motors of growth]. By Hubert Kieseewetter. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2004. 307 pp. Bibliography, notes, index. Paper, €24.00. ISBN: 3-515-08613-7.

Reviewed by Frank B. Tipton

This is a lightly revised version of a book originally published in 1988, now updated with some additional material and the citation of more recent publications. It is a summary history of German economic development from the mid-eighteenth century to the outbreak of the First World War. Hubert Kieseewetter's thesis is that although the division of Germany into many small states hindered development before the early nineteenth century, the unification of the country, first through the tariff union (Zollverein) in 1834 and then through political unification, culminating in the foundation of the empire in 1871, unleashed a process of "regional competition." This in turn led to relatively rapid industrialization, at least compared with the rate of industrial progress in other European states (pp. 11, 290–91).

The book was "old" economic history when it was originally published, and it remains so. Economists will note the absence of formal hypotheses. Although Kieseewetter provides a lot of statistics, they are deployed as descriptive evidence, and he does not analyze them systematically. Treatment of the Zollverein, for example, concentrates on legal changes, notably the end to guild restrictions on occupation and the move to more unified systems of money, weights, and measures (pp. 55–62). Skeptical reevaluations by other economic historians of the Zollverein's impact on internal trade are dismissed with citations of absolute and per capita increases in total exports and imports after 1834, but there is no consideration of rates, trends, structures, diversions, or regional effects (pp. 258–59).

Chronological chapters take the story through some of the traditionally assigned periods: "preconditions and hindrances" from 1750 to 1815; "paths to the German tariff union," from 1815 to 1833; the years "from revolution to revolution," 1830 to 1848–9; "takeoff and the foundation of the empire," from 1850 to 1871; "foundation boom and foundation crisis," 1871–78; the "great depression and large-scale industry," from 1873 to 1895; and finally the "rise to world power," from 1895 to 1914. Kieseewetter at a number of points expresses his own skepticism about the validity of the labels normally attached to these periods. He believes the measures that would demonstrate a "takeoff" as originally defined by Walt Rostow "can scarcely be determined for Germany" in the 1850s and 1860s (pp. 68–69). Similarly, the idea of the "great depression" depends on Nikolai Kondratieff's theory of long waves of development. Again, the

statistics Kieseewetter applies are ambiguous, and he defines periods more in terms of economic policy than objective measures (p. 91). But his skepticism has not led him to rethink the problems of periodization, and the result remains eclectic and ad hoc.

In contradistinction to what one might expect from the subtitle, the second section of the book is not devoted to regions, but rather to chapters on sectors of the national economy, that is, the aggregate of the economies of the German states and then of the Bismarckian empire. The author does not link his references to regional variations, nor does he introduce any sections that synthesize and clarify the very different structural elements within the various regional economies. He certainly provides no sense of “regional competition,” that is, of the regions (or their governments) competing with each other. Nor does he explore the sense of regional identity of firms within an industry and how this might have affected their competitiveness. Readers of this journal may find themselves frustrated with the chapters that mention a large number of firms that achieved technological progress but fail to analyze how those firms managed to do so. For example, we learn first about the establishment of cotton-spinning factories along rivers in the first half of the nineteenth century, and then we are told that by 1898 Germany had 187 places with cotton-spinning factories, and that, of these, only 16 had more than 100,000 spindles. However, we do not learn what this fact reveals about the industry or about the firms involved (pp. 173–74). Kieseewetter has written on the topic of regional development extensively, notably in *Region und Industrie in Europa, 1815–1995* [Region and industry in Europe, 1815–1995] (2000), but his earlier experience has not been deployed in this book.

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