H-Net Reviews
in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Peter O'Brien. *Beyond the Swastika.* London and New York: Routledge, 1996. ix + 138 pp. Cloth $49.95. ISBN 0-415-13851-5. $16.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-415-13852-9.

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Published on H-German (April, 1998)

No matter how slim this book may be (138 pages), its impact on the intellectual historiography of the Federal Republic (and the author's chances of being awarded a German *Gastprofessur*), however, will be great. In spite of its martial cover illustration (*Der Krieg* by Otto Dix), Peter O'Brien's *Beyond the Swastika* is not an alarmist report on the potential resurrection of a militant German nationalism threatening Germany's liberal political system. On the contrary, by turning the customary argument on its head, O'Brien sets out to demonstrate how an entrenched, technocratic liberalism "overzealously protects Germany's liberal democracy to the detriment of minority groups" who, because of their assumed lack of modern, liberal values, "are denied full political participation" (p. i).

The author sees in "technocratic liberalism" the basic concept for "vigilant democracy"–a policy originally modeled on the re-educative efforts undertaken by Western liberals after World War II in order to ensure the establishment of a modern democracy in Germany. This policy provided a suitable socio-economic environment for a liberal political system, it educated citizens in the principles of liberalism and it tested individuals to assure that they "become and remain genuine liberals" rather than assuming that this might happen automatically (p. 11). Faced with the former popularity of the Nazi regime and the very democratic process which made Hitler Reich Chancellor, the author leaves the reader in no doubt about the original necessity of such a policy of technocratic liberalism. As time passed, however, this Enlightenment-inspired mission "changed from exorcizing demons to converting souls" (p. 40) when applied not to former (guilty) Nazis but to minorities that merely share a different political mentality, cultural history, or educational socialization. One obvious example of this kind of illiberal liberalism had been the notorious *Radikalenerlass*–the job-ban directed against so-called "extremists" in the civil service sector. The institution of the *Berufsverbot* has been declared illegal by the European High Court for Human Rights only recently.

O'Brien, a specialist on immigration policy, sees "technocratic liberalism" also at work in the policies dealing with foreign workers as well as during the reunification process, which brought another seventeen million "stationary migrants" to the Federal Republic. The author, himself a foreign resident in Germany for no less than four years, has in-depth knowledge as well as the cultural distance necessary for assessing and interpreting the events and policies analytically. Even native German readers (and some political scientists) will profit from this book.

Faced with a large number of foreign workers from non-democratic or less democratic societies, West German intellectuals were encouraged to implement the benevolent policy of piecemeal integration, thus–so O'Brien's argument goes–displacing foreigners' inherited negative image of Germans. Instead of needing liberalization, German intellectuals "could now change places and become the liberalizers themselves" (p. 67). The SPD/FDP administration's policy of "integration," firmly based on liberal Enlightenment-inspired values, never saw first-generation immigrants fit for full suffrage because they were not trained in democratic values and thus represented a potential seedbed of extremism. The conservative-liberal coalition, in contrast, demonstrated–its former xenophobic rhetoric notwithstanding–a more tolerant attitude towards foreign cultural and political value-systems and better appreciated the "*great sacrifices* many migrants experience in the change from traditional to modern lifestyles" (p. 99). Instead of continuing the compulsory stern modernization efforts of the Social Democrats, the Kohl administration eventually rejected piecemeal progressive reforms, such as the granting of local-voting rights to immigrants, and led the way to full naturalization instead. But again, the new law *forces* foreign residents to choose between becoming liberal German citizens or retaining their original nationality (well knowing that most immigrants do not want to naturalize), in order to document their positive attitudes toward the political system of the

Federal Republic.

The collapse of the Berlin Wall not only brought German reunification, but also the rise of GDR-nostalgia, the PDS, neo-Nazi activities, and an east German population that was seen to be infected with the virus of illiberalism. "Vigilant democrats had seventeen million new suspects" (p. 124). For those who are not quoted, it makes for hilarious reading when a number of arrogant West German intellectuals diagnose East Germans (pp. 120-27) who seem to have somehow degenerated anthropologically under communist auspices. Instead of showing sympathetic comradeship with their new fellow citizens (an attitude that is usually associated with nationalism), predominantly conservative West German GDR-specialists diagnosed in former East Germans generally "affective-emotional deficits", such as "chronic anxieties, strong future pessimism, low self-esteem, depression ... hopelessness" as well as "motivational deficits" in the form of apathy, conformity, and even obesity. One wonders how and why these obese, drug-addicted, apathetic, depressed, anxious, pessimistic east Germans, hopelessly ridden with GDR-nostalgia, managed to band together in mass demonstrations, swim through the Oder, jump on trains in the Leipzig station, break through frontier barriers in Hungary and even through the Wall in Berlin, and eventually succeed in ousting an authoritarian regime and liberalizing themselves–a success that West Germans, let alone intellectuals, have never achieved. All those "great emancipatory accomplishments" notwithstanding, many west German political pedagogues and psycho-sociological specialists again saw a cultural cleavage expanding: this time between the experience of East Germans and "[t]he mental demands which pluralistic democracy and social market economy place on social actors ...," concluding that "it will take a longer individual and collective learning process before the east German citizens can be made equal to the citizens of the old federal states ..."

Accordingly, O'Brien argues, "east Germans became objects of a liberal technocratic campaign of integration similar, if not identical, to the one devised for foreigners, which itself ... took much from the one originally devised for West Germans after the war" (p. 115). This policy made its first appearance during the reunification process, in which the financially strong and liberal west German parties, well versed in marketing strategies, outmanoeuvred their unreliable east German opponents. The decision not to draft a new constitution successfully silenced the potentially illiberal voices of the East German population that would have had their say in the plebiscite necessary for its ratification. The ensuing *Saeuberung* (again an original quote) of the East German public service personnel was conducted along lines "not wholly unlike th[ose] given to the Allies in JCS 1067 or West German police in the Aliens Law of 1965" (p. 117).

O'Brien's treatise is a prime example of an argumentative essay that deliberately sheds light on but one side of post-World War II German liberalism–namely, "the pernicious underside of the reformed German liberal" (p. 5). He displays an understandable, but exaggerated fear of a renaissance of totalitarianism which eventually "generated the very technocratic liberalism which politically harms Germany's minorities" (p. 15) and so eventually develops into a kind of multi-totalitarian system. The author might have added the case of German graduate students, upwardly mobile migrants so to speak, who depend on scholarships for their advancement in fields that (especially so in the liberal-arts and social-science sectors) have almost completely fallen prey to the influence of the established German political parties and their respective (tax-sponsored) political foundations. The book can be read as an exercise in the dialectics of Enlightenment liberalism and can even be seen as a sequel to the Horkheimer/Adorno thesis.

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Citation: Thomas Schmitz. Review of O'Brien, Peter, *Beyond the Swastika.* H-German, H-Net Reviews. April, 1998.
URL: http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=1893

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