

# H-Net Reviews

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Thomas W. Maulucci, Detlef Junker, eds. *GIs in Germany: The Social, Economic, Cultural and Political History of the American Military Presence*. Publications of the German Historical Institute Series. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. xi + 365 pp. \$99.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-521-85133-6.

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## Over There: Lessons from America's Martial Presence in Germany

In 1987, Doug DePew was an American infantryman, serving at an American base that housed tactical nuclear warheads. DePew was a “tower rat,” routinely mounting guard over the fenced-in American base. In his memoir, DePew wrote: “The perimeter of [our] site was a paved trail and a grass verge.... [There] was a double fence ten or twelve feet tall, with razor wire at the top and razor wire at the bottom. At the time, it looked like there was razor wire everywhere!... [One time] we were alerted on Easter weekend and had to report to a special formation. The CO [commanding officer] told us to be ready to respond to the site in force. Every Easter, [German] anti-nuke peace protestors held a big demonstration. This one was expected to be one of the largest ever because of the tensions with the Soviets over the Pershings and some treaty the President [Ronald Reagan] was discussing with the Russians. A lot of Germans wanted us out.”[1]

DePew was just another American kid when he joined the army and went to Germany, but as he points out in his memoir, his memories of that service can be matched with those of “millions of Americans [who] were stationed in Germany during the Cold War.”[2] In fact, some twenty-two million Americans have lived for extended time in Germany since 1945, as military personnel, civilian employees, or members of their families. Collectively, they outnumber the population of many countries. But in spite of such a host, only a limited amount of detailed research has been conducted on this

complex liaison between former enemies who became Cold War allies. This is why *GIs in Germany* is such a welcome and valuable publication. Built around papers delivered at an international conference on German-American relations, held in Heidelberg in 2000, the essays in this volume are supplemented by a welcome statistical summary of American personnel stationed in Germany from 1945 to 2000 and an extremely useful bibliography of important scholarly publications on German-American military cooperation and the sociocultural impact of this relationship.

The fifteen essays constitute an impressive collection, not least because the mix of American and German scholars creates an uncommon opportunity to compare how the same events appear from two national perspectives. Thus, U.S. military expert Dennis Showalter traces the manner in which the United States nudged a hesitant postwar West Germany into rearming as a major component of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). In contrast, Klaus Naumann, a veteran instructor at the Hamburg Institute, meticulously examines how the Bundeswehr adapted many of its training and planning practices to the U.S. Army's model, no easy task, given the differences in language, culture, and the ever-present memory that one nation had fought the other in two world wars.

Among the standouts in this collection are the studies

that rely heavily on archival research. Theodor Scharnholtz's incisive analysis of German-American local interactions makes impressive use of *Duetsche Zietungen* (a collection of German newspapers) and urban archival collections. Jennifer Evans's use of army courts-martial records highlights her revealing (and sobering) assessment of crimes perpetrated by American personnel during the early years of the occupation. In a penetrating look at the development of anti-NATO protests in the 1980s, Anni Baker weaves a striking story from news accounts and citizens' letters, lending weight to DePew's observation that many "Germans wanted us out" of their country. And Alexander Vazansky takes a well-documented and penetrating look at army race relations and morale problems in the post-Vietnam era. These are among the highlights, but there is not a weak essay in the collection; all open the door to further research and insights.[3]

The authors have made valuable contributions to the nation's military history and to the study of international relations. They have also offered a model that may be applied to similar treatments of the American military's "presence" in other nations. Could, with more such studies, patterns be discerned from the American experiences in Japan, Germany, and South Korea, for example? Could such patterns suggest where, and how, the

military presence in more recent years fell short of the intended outcomes? Could the overall debates about American efforts at peacekeeping, even nation building, be looked at in significantly new ways? Possibly. In the meantime, scholars of American military history, international relations, and international social history will certainly find this volume to be a valuable addition to their reading lists.

#### Notes

[1]. Doug DePew, *SAT & BAF! Memories of a Tower Rat* (Denver: Outskirts Press, 2011), 9, 57, 98. The "Pershings" in DePew's remarks were MGM-31 Pershing medium range missiles, part of the U.S. arsenal. The missiles could deliver either conventional explosives or tactical nuclear warheads (with sixty, one hundred, or four hundred kiloton yields at detonation) at ranges up to 450 miles. In the event of combat, such weapons would be deployed to offset the Soviet superiority in tanks, artillery, and troops.

[2]. *Ibid.*, xi.

[3]. The relations between American military personnel and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), for example, could be profitably examined using some of the approaches used in this volume.

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