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>From Service to the "King and Fatherland" to Service to Democracy

A decade after the end of the Second World War, the Federal Republic of Germany had established its bona fides as a democracy, and, with the victorious Allies' agreement to lift the last vestiges of their direct control over West German politics, it was recognized as a sovereign state. In the West, Germans seemed committed once again to parliamentary government and the rule of law. In this book, Jay Lockenour argues that in 1945 it was by no means a foregone conclusion that former Wehrmacht officers would accept this development. The German officer corps, disgraced by complete defeat and capitulation in May 1945, charged at Nuremberg with crimes against humanity, conspiring to start the war, and responsibility "in large measure for the miseries and suffering that have fallen on millions of men, women, and children," (p. 14) had constituted a fundamental pillar of the National Socialist state and had contributed significantly to undermining Germany's first attempt at democracy in the 1920s. But in the late 1940s and early 1950s, former officers found modes to accommodate themselves to democratic institutions. Lockenour concludes that "by largely competing to define democracy rather than undermine it, the former officers contributed in their own way to the Federal Republic of Germany's early legitimacy and ultimate survival" (p. 10).

Organizations of former officers are a vital part of Lockenour's story. Although war veterans' organizations had been explicitly outlawed by the Allies in 1945--central to the Allied project to exterminate the virus of National Socialism through massive injections of demilitarization, denazification and democratization--by the late 1940s and early 1950s, the Allies tacitly tolerated organizations of former officers. Veterans came together to lobby for improvement of their economic circumstances and pension rights and to contest their political discrimination and "defamation." Former officers reacted allergically to the perceived injustice of Allied policy and the judgment of the Nuremberg tribunal, insisting that they were the bearers of German traditions that had not succumbed to National Socialist doctrine. Their ef-
forts brought results. Measures introduced in the early 1950s to reinstate pension benefits for former Nazi civil servants--stripped by the Allies of their jobs and retirement rights in 1945--were extended to include former officers. Veterans also re-entered political life as parliamentary representatives and municipal officials. In their insistence that officers deemed war criminals by the Allies be amnestied, the national organizations of former officers also found allies at the highest levels of the state--including Chancellor Konrad Adenauer. Adenauer also echoed their insistence that "precisely the democratic state can least afford to do without the lofty values of true soldierdom" (p. 50). Veterans' organizations also found allies from across the political spectrum in their efforts to focus international attention on the plight of German soldiers who remained in Soviet captivity long after the end of the war and in some cases well into the 1950s.

The Cold War and the Allied pressure for the Federal Republic to rearm tremendously facilitated the ability of former officers to find a place in the Federal Republic and West Germans' ability to embrace former officers. In a world divided between East and West, "veterans' organizations had a bargaining chip in their struggle to regain soldiers' pensions and restore the honor of German soldierdom" (p. 94). They could also credibly claim to have a particularly acute understanding of the dangers of Communism and the requirements necessary to shape a new German armed forces. It is not surprising that the officers drew effectively on a rhetoric of "moral rearmament" used by the National Socialists because the face of the enemy remained the same. Wehrmacht officers, practiced in identifying the threat of the Bolshevik menace, identified the Soviet occupation of Eastern Europe as "the Asiatic-Bolshevism invasion," (p. 135) paralleling their Chancellor's pronouncements that Moscow was not part of Europe but was rooted in the "culture of the most backward part of Asia." They could enthusiastically endorse Adenauer's judgment that "Asia stands on the Elbe." In a postwar Federal Republic fundamentally defined by anti-Communism, former officers were not marching to a different drummer. There were, however, variations on familiar themes in the 1950s, as postwar West German prosperity and an emerging consumer culture presented dangers of a different sort. The "weakness of the West"--and its susceptibility to Communist infiltration--could be measured in the "glorification of cinema values" and the "billions ... spent every year for advertisement," instructing its citizens about what brand of cigarettes to buy before telling them what they needed to do to defend democracy (pp. 145-6). Former soldiers argued "that the materialist postwar German society lacked the virtues of discipline, service, honor, and honesty that had always been the soldierly professional hallmarks" (p. 32).

With West Germany's entry into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the creation of the Bundeswehr, the Defense Minister Theodor Blank told former officers what they had long believed: "I need you!... The new German Bundeswehr will, as much as possible, repay its debt of gratitude to the old soldiers.... We know that there remains much to be made good for the German soldiers. We need your expert advice, we need your good wishes, your positive support" (p. 113). As Lockenour concludes, "In its eagerness for sovereignty and legitimacy, the Federal Republic pursued policies that gave former officers a stake in the new democratic society" (p. 183). What a difference a decade makes.

In a particularly interesting chapter on officers' postwar analyses of the July 20, 1944 attempt to murder Hitler, Lockenour makes clear that among former officers conceptions of "discipline, service, honor, and honesty" were not always uniform. July 20 raised difficult questions about the limits to loyalty and the definition of treason for which officers had no easy answers. The Federal Republic's search for a past that included resistance confronted the concern of many officers'
that the acts of disloyal assassins should not be glorified. They also worried that praise for the conspirators implied condemnation of those who had not resisted the Nazi state, glossing over the fact that "the realities of soldiering posed career soldiers in the Third Reich more difficult problems than any other occupational group in the world has ever been confronted with," (p. 178) as one leading representative of former career officers concluded. Again, officers' attitudes mirrored those of the public at large, leading Lockenour to argue that veterans swam with, not against, the dominant political tide in the Federal Republic.

**Soldiers as Citizens** is a significant contribution to a growing literature that explores how postwar West German society "came to terms with the past" of National Socialism and the Third Reich. Lockenour acknowledges the intersection of his work with important studies by Donald Abenheim and James Diehl, and his book also echoes important themes in Norbert Frei's *Verghangenheitspolitik: Die Anfänge der Bundesrepublik und die NS-Vergangenheit*. [1] As Frei demonstrates, in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the "politics of the past" focused not on the crimes of the Third Reich but on the reconstruction of a nation deeply traumatized by the twelve years of fascism, war, and complete defeat and on the social integration of many who had been active supporters of the Nazi state. Lockenour's discussion of postwar concerns about materialism and the anti-Americanism implicit in attacks on consumer culture also parallels the important work of Uta G. Poiger,[2] suggesting the ways in which West Germans could find reasons to distance themselves from America even as their Chancellor pushed them into a military alliance headed by the United States.

Lockenour's study documents the remarkably rapid move of (West) Germany from fascism to democracy. This successful transition that took place within the context of the Cold War and on the basis of a fundamental anti-Communism that unified virtually all West Germans also included the social and political integration of the leaders of Hitler's army. This was something that Weimar could not accomplish. Writing in 1956, Fritz Ren Allemann declared that *Bonn ist nicht Weimar*. [3] The successful creation of an army of "soldiers in uniform" was one powerful indication that he was right.

Notes


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