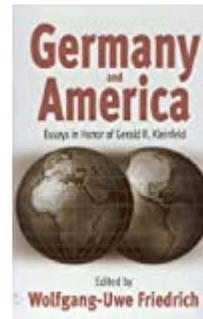




**Wolfgang-Uwe Friedrich, ed.** *Germany and America: Essays in Honor of Gerald R. Kleinfeld.* New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2001. xii + 324 pp. \$39.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-57181-274-2.



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## A Great Communicator

### A Great Communicator

There is hardly another person who can be remembered to have such an outstanding record in improving scholarly communications between the United States and Germany than Gerald Kleinfeld. In the mid-seventies, Kleinfeld contacted a small group of interested scholars, and in 1976 inaugurated the first annual conference of a Western Association for German Studies. Two years later the group began publishing a journal, the *German Studies Review*. Since then, the journal has provided an excellent platform for all scholars doing research on the German speaking countries on both sides of the Atlantic. When I met Gerry Kleinfeld for the first time in 1979 at a WAGS conference at Stanford University, he impressed me with his vision to establish a US-wide organization, and to hold conferences in Washington, D.C. Kleinfeld worked tirelessly to realize his aim, and he managed to raise funds for the good purpose of communication: “We do it with the vacuum cleaner principle—to find something everywhere.”

Shortly after indeed, the first annual conference was held in the nation’s capital, and the organization was

renamed the German Studies Association in 1983. Since then the exchange among all branches of German studies has continually improved, and the journal became known as an important means of communication for students and scholars of history, political science and literature. Former German presidents, senior politicians, members of parliament, and scholars from Germany (until 1989 also from East Germany), Austria and Switzerland participated in the annual conferences, with some seven hundred to eight hundred persons attending. The membership of GSA has reached 1,800 persons. The spiritus rector of all these activities has been Gerald Kleinfeld, who was the first person I ever met to have the whole organization of such a major conference in his laptop—one of the many specializations Kleinfeld promoted. Now the Executive Director has withdrawn from active service and has passed the editorial work of the journal in younger hands.

As a scholar, Kleinfeld started with publications on the Spanish Blue Legion in Germany’s Eastern War during World War II. After the 1980s his research emphasis shifted to contemporary German politics as well as

to the problem of German unification. It was good luck that Gerry Kleinfeld was not only present in Berlin at the time of the fall of the wall, but was also able to give his assessment of the event via NBC News to a worldwide audience.

The essays in his honor include nineteen authors who have been companions in the way of German-American exchange and understanding; some essays are written in German. Eleven of them come from American scholars, eight from German colleagues. As is usual with a festschrift, the topics cover a wide range of themes, and the essays are held together mainly by the connection with Kleinfeld's work on interpreting Germany in the United States. The authors include professors of political science, history, and literature. Some of the essays are excellent pieces of scholarship, while others summarize earlier findings. Most of the authors, but not all, are more or less on the conservative end of the political spectrum. Thus, they share Kleinfeld's joy about the end of communism and his efforts to unmask the totalitarian trends in that form of political rule. Some contributors, however, transcend such an approach.

One contribution, by Wolf D. Gruner, goes back to the nineteenth century in his analysis of American views on the German constitutions. In a fascinating overview, Gerhard Weinberg compares Hitler's and Roosevelt's postwar economic planning. Two scholars of German language assess the history of anti-Nazis and of the German resistance against Hitler: Frank Trommler deals with the German scholars in American exile and traces the problem of a brain drain, while Hinrich Seeba makes illuminating remarks on Victor Klemperer's "Corrupted Language." All the other essays deal with the period after World War II and are based on earlier research

or book publications by the various authors. They include a good empiric survey by Marion Deshmukh on the postwar arts reconstruction by the "Kunstvereine," David Barclay on Berlin's Lord Major Ernst Reuter in the early Cold War, aptly supplemented by Hans-Juergen Schroeder on Marshall Plan progaganda in Berlin.

It cannot be merely fortuitous that several contributions deal with perceptions in the transatlantic perspective: Clay Clemens on Helmut Kohl's image of the United States belongs in that category, as does a piece by Konrad H. Jarausch that deals with American images of the German Democratic Republic. Transatlantic relations are also the subject of articles by Andrei S. Markovits ("The Europea, German, and American Left: Evolution and Transformation"), Manfred Wilke ("Sternstunde der deutsch-amerikanischen Allianz"—the fall of the wall), and Michael G. Huelshoff, which deals with the role of transatlantic trade conflicts. The latter in particular analyzes the differences in the underlying ideologies. Three political scientists chose current problems of politics and society which may be of interest to an American public: Karl-Rudolf Korte gives a general assessment of the role of heads of governments or states in present days, Eckhard Jesse deals with political extremism in present day Germany, while Wolfgang Bergsdorf, president of Erfurt University, writes about "the German university and its departure to the science society."

I am sure Gerald Kleinfeld was very pleased with such a dedication by some of the scholars who accompanied him on his long and successful career as an American interpreter of the German past and present. More of them are needed and will try to step into Gerry's boots. Hopefully he himself will continue to remain active in his singular way despite his official retirement.

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