



Norbert Frei. *Karrieren im Zwielight: Hitlers Eliten nach 1945.* Frankfurt/M. u.a.: Campus Verlag, 2001. 364 S. EUR 25,50 (broschiert), ISBN 978-3-593-36790-3.



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Restoration and Renaissance in the Federal Republic

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Karrieren im Zwielight is the companion volume to a six-part ARD documentary aired on German television in the summer of 2002. Five young German scholars contribute essays detailing the transition from dictatorship to democracy of elite professional groups: doctors, industrialists/ employers, officers, judges, and journalists. Dr. Thomas Fischer of *Suedwestrundfunk* provides an introduction and Dr. Norbert Frei contributes a thought-provoking concluding essay.

The five thematic essays share, to a certain extent, the sensationalist, almost prurient tone typical of television documentaries. Individual chapters are heavily biographical. Text boxes along with numerous photographs and illustrations help the reader savor her righteous indignation that criminals such as Werner Heyde (a.k.a. "Dr. Sawade") or former members of the SS were allowed to exercise such influence on the early history of the Federal Republic and equally relish her sense of satisfaction when these morally repugnant characters receive their just desserts.

To give the editor of the anthology credit, the work maintains a consistent format and style throughout. In each chapter, the reader is treated to a brief survey of the "coordination" of the profession in question during the Third Reich. The basic trajectory for each case study is very similar: People with significant links to the Nazi regime or indeed criminal pasts achieve success in the new republic; the 1950s are dominated by a consensual silence that frustrates individuals trying to expose these personal continuities; beginning in the early- or mid-1960s or occasionally as late as the 1980s, new trials, scandals, or the advent of a new generation brings Nazi skeletons out of many (though not all) closets.

The strength of the individual essays lies in their clear exposition of the various factors encouraging a collective silence on the issue of continuity during the 1950s and the reasons—sometimes circumstantial, sometimes personal—for the collapse of that consensus. For those conversant with the postwar history of West Germany, many of the characters will be familiar (Dr. Karl Brandt, Josef Mengele, Erich von Manstein, Alfred Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach, Hans Filbinger, Henri Nannen), though

even specialists in the period will encounter unfamiliar faces. A small number of footnotes (not always present in such companion volumes) grace each chapter and point to some of the relevant German language literature on each topic. Each author argues that the consensual, collective silence operated (along with Adenauer's personal authoritarian style and the economic stability/prosperity of the 1950s) to convince elites to make peace with the new republic, in stark contrast with Weimar (p. 108).

Frei's contribution, "Hitler's Eliten nach 1945—eine Bilanz," offers, as the title suggests, a welcome survey of the preceding essays and adds insight into the larger picture—the general problem of continuity and discontinuity. Concluding a work about continuities, Frei pleads for the significance of discontinuities by arguing that "for all the absurdities and weaknesses that accompanied the Allies' cleansing measures from day one ... the measures were not without effect" (p. 307). Denazification formed an important discontinuity, a caesura, with which the Allies signaled their unmistakable will to deny National Socialism (and anyone who clung openly to its ideals) any future in Germany. As others have argued (myself included), it is the discontinuities of prisoner of war camps, "automatic arrest," denazification proceedings and war crimes trials that are as significant in shaping the development of the Federal Republic as are the Nazi skeletons that would occasionally tumble out of closets.

As have myriad studies since Martin Broszat, Klaus-Dietmar Henke, and Hans Woller's *Von Stalingrad zur Waehrungsreform* (1990), this work reminds us of the value of historical studies that straddle the "boundary" of May 8, 1945, both for exposing continuities and for understanding what was newly possible in the postwar era. The book also points to significant further research in two ways. It makes tantalizing references to the pivotal role played by the German Democratic Republic (DDR) and in particular Albert Norden, the DDR's Secretary for "Agitation and Propaganda." The chapter on jurists and Frei's conclusions especially indicate the fruitful research

still to be done in that area. Second, the volume makes occasional references to the thoroughness with which the DDR eliminated the elites who had ruled under National Socialism. Frei's lament that the DDR's social elites have been insufficiently studied rings true (pp. 304-05). Surely the DDR was not able to replace every doctor, lawyer, journalist and judge (not to mention officer) with loyal cadres who had weathered the Third Reich in Moscow or elsewhere in exile. These elites had a story as well; to the extent that the history of Germany today is the history of *both* the Federal and Democratic German Republics, they could have been profitably included. It is regrettable that the opportunity was missed here to discuss the issue of continuity in the DDR as well.

As he does in his own scholarly work, Frei in his concluding contribution very judiciously balances the exposure of significant continuities between the Third Reich and the Federal Republic with the explication of the very real discontinuities that, in the end, produced a stable, democratic West German society and polity. Hannah Arendt noted famously and sarcastically upon her postwar visit to Germany that it was impossible to meet a single Nazi in Germany. Frei argues that while the renunciation of National Socialism may have been mere opportunism for many at first, the sheer persistence of that renunciation, and the utter silence on the subject of continuities, grew in significance over the years until a "clear normative demarcation (Abgrenzung) from National Socialism" existed. There was no going back. Frei concludes that even if only a minority of this generation of elites became true liberals, at the very least "a majority grew over time into passable democrats" (p. 335).

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