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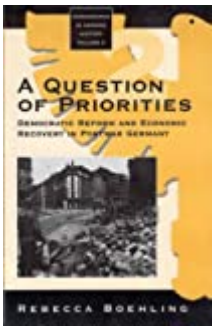

Rebecca Böhling. *A Question of Priorities: Democratic Reform and Economic Recovery in Postwar Germany.* Providence, RI: Berghahn Books, 1996. Ppp. 301. Cloth. $49.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-57181-035-9.

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Twenty years ago, Lucius D. Clay recounted his experience as U.S. military governor in Germany after World War II in a manuscript submitted to the National Archives. "I had no policy given to me as to what kind of democracy we wanted," Clay recalled in an unforgettable passage on Germany's reeducation. "[W]e spent one whole day disagreeing on a definition of democracy...[however, we] could not agree on any common definition."[1]

For many scholars, Germany represents the stage on which the geopolitical goals of the United States during the early phase of the Cold War were most fully revealed. Decisions made in the decade after 1945 formed the basis for the political, social, economic and cultural development of the Federal Republic. Much of the existing literature concentrates on U.S. aims and policies. Few monographs cover the German side, even fewer the interplay between German civilians and American occupiers. This is what Rebecca Boehling has chosen to do. Abandoning the usual top-down perspective, she focuses on events at the municipal level in Frankfurt am Main, Stuttgart, and Munich.

Boehling analyzes the implementation of U.S. policies framed in Washington and Potsdam (including JCS 1067 and the four Ds: denazification, demilitarization, decentralization, and democratization). Her study moves from 1945 when the U.S. military government (MG) still controlled the appointment of German officials, to 1946 and 1948 when Germans reached self-government through the first local elections.

In line with previous scholarship, Boehling emphasizes the lack of cohesive planning in Washington after the war had ended. While the War Department and the State Department favored a reconstructive peace and the Treasury Department harbored a more interventionist design geared toward the pastoralization of Germany, the Office of Strategic Services continually emphasized the potential of the "Other," i.e. more democratic Germany that could form a new democratic postwar society. This confusion, never resolved, was carried over into the occupation in Germany.

Boehling describes the individuals in charge of reeducation, who were university professors, journalists and emigres in civilian life and who mainly operated in subordinate positions within the Information Control Division (ICD). The officers in charge of selecting municipal administrators, meanwhile, were mostly career officers, engineers, and the like. Their primary concern was not to denazify and democratize Germany but to keep law and order, speed economic and material recovery, and get life in the zone back to normal. In other words, those who knew most about German affairs were stuck in minor po-

sitions while those who made political appointments had the least expertise in German culture.

The author shows that U.S. officials, in an effort to establish order, preferred "apolitical" or conservative bureaucrats from the Weimar period over younger and more "political," "anti-Nazi" activists for political posts. Originally appointed as temporary solutions, these German municipal politicians often ran successfully for office in 1946, nominated friends (often with shady pasts) to municipal councils, reinstituted parties and traditions valid before 1933, and exercised political influence for decades to come. Retracing the profiles and visions of both German administrators and MG officials, Boehling shows that "the lines between the two groups were not drawn on account of nationality or occupied and occupier but on account of vision, interest and expertise" (p. 125): career officers had much in common with local political and business elites; emigres usually allied themselves with political activists on the left.

In an impressive chapter on early grass-roots movements, Boehling examines *Antifa* groups (antifascists) consisting of a wide array of politically active anti-Nazis–notably communists–whose common characteristic was staunch anti-totalitarianism. In the eyes of U.S. officials, the quest of these groups for long-term political reform and socioeconomic changes threatened the establishment of law and order. With the onset of the Cold War, MG officials increasingly perceived the *Antifas* to be "camouflaged bodies for the propagation of Communism" (pp. 175-6). The one exception where the MG relied heavily on anti-Nazis was in the denazification process and the appointment of police officials. Yet this "almost exclusively negative role of accusation and judgment" (p. 115), Boehling speculates, prevented the formation of bottom-up democratic movements and isolated leftist parties in the political arena.

Boehling's case studies demonstrate individual vicissitudes on the local level, such as with the influence of the churches or the role of the ICD in Frankfurt am Main, Stuttgart, and Munich. Yet her conclusions stretch beyond city lines: the opportunity of the Hour Zero, "one of those unique periods in history when a boundary could be drawn to demarcate the past from the future" (p. 268), was lost. Policy makers in the executive branch were primarily concerned with the national interests of the United States. Their concentration on economics yielded a host of positive side-effects for U.S. proconsuls in Germany. The sooner Germany stabilized, the sooner the "GI boys could come home," the faster Germany could be integrated into the western economic orbit, and the more forcefully U.S. propagandists could fight communism and the Soviet Union. After Secretary of State James Byrnes's speech in 1946 at the latest, economic reconstruction became not only a priority but also the official tenet of U.S. policy in Germany. Denazification, civil service reform, and labor activities were all sacrificed on the altar of stability and anti-communism.

This study covers an impressive array of sources from the local archives of Frankfurt, Stuttgart and Munich. The chapters are logically structured along both chronological and topical lines. The narrative–though sometimes halting owing to a host of acronyms, percentages, and numbers–is concise and enticing. Boehling's argument that the priority of economic reconstruction blocked a democratic transformation and enforced the reemergence of pre-1933 personalities, structures, and traditions will catch the attention of all scholars working in the field of postwar German-American relations as well as U.S. perspectives during the early Cold War.

Yet Boehling's quest for detailed accuracy on the local level may have blurred her vision of the big picture. The rising Soviet-American tensions receive only marginal attention. Boehling reproaches the United States for having isolated leftist parties, a process which accelerated the East-West conflict. Yet she misses the significance of the Soviet tenure during this time; Soviet-American relations deteriorated rapidly in 1946. The Soviets viciously attacked the Western Allies in their newspapers, swamped western zones with their own publications, and secretly banned U.S.-licensed papers from their zone as early as January 1946. U.S. officials had every reason to fear communist influences (including the KPD) in the western zones. They were also convinced that material reconstruction formed an indispensable basis for reeducation. Clay's reminiscences mentioned above indicate that he definitely expected a directive concerning the implementation of democracy in postwar Germany.

The author's now-traditional argument that anticommunism replaced antifascism in 1946-47 merits cautious investigation. Rolf Steininger and others have shown that through- out the occupation, U.S. officials dreaded nationalism from both the right and the left. Nationalism would push Germans (and their hopes for reunification) into Stalin's embrace. It is questionable whether officials were interested in non-Nazis rather than activist anti-Nazis: active resistance did not necessarily comprise democratic ideals. On the other hand, the influence of (even leftist) emigres, still a neglected aspect, was proba-

bly more enduring than Boehling wants us to believe.

It is difficult to judge the theoretical affiliation of this book. Boehling's methodology merges with recent studies emphasizing the active role of German civilians in the process of reconstruction. At the same time, Boehling undeniably echoes earlier claims dating from the 1970s and 1980s that criticized the notion of an Hour Zero, blamed the United States' lax occupation policy, and stressed the persistence of the old German cadre. There is a crucial difference; Boehling implicitly questions the common assumption that U.S. policy makers unanimously wanted to democratize Germany. As she demonstrates, the decision-making process in Washington and the resulting directive JCS 1067 remained sufficiently nebulous to allow various factions to interpret it however they desired.

In sum, *A Question of Priorities* is a well-written and informative source for U.S. actions on the municipal level that makes for a useful contrast to much of the existing literature. Boehling has sharpened our perception of the many factions that created American policy in occupied Germany. We need more studies on the micro-level, analyzing economic, social, and cultural interest groups in both Germany and the United States. Boehling has drawn our attention to a specific cast of actors and perspectives; there exist many more who merit historians' attention, such as religious leaders, professional guilds, intellectuals, artists or even those bi-national emigres whose influence she downplays emphatically.

NOTE

[1]. Lucius D. Clay, "Proconsuls of a People, by Another People, for Both People," in Robert D. Wolfe, *Americans as Proconsuls: United States Military Government in Germany and Japan, 1944-1952* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1984), pp. 103f.

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