

## GERMAN HISTORY, 1930–1960 TWELFTH TRANSATLANTIC DOCTORAL SEMINAR IN GERMAN HISTORY

Seminar at the University of Freiburg, April 26–29, 2006. Jointly organized by the GHI Washington, the BMW Center for German and European Studies at Georgetown University, and the Historisches Seminar of the University of Freiburg. Conveners: Roger Chickering (Georgetown University), Ulrich Herbert (University of Freiburg), and Richard F. Wetzell (GHI). Faculty Mentors: Peter Carl Caldwell (Rice University), Doris Kaufmann (University of Bremen), Uta Poiger (University of Washington), Bernd Weisbrod (University of Göttingen).

The Twelfth Transatlantic Doctoral Seminar brought together sixteen doctoral students from Europe and North America to discuss their dissertation projects on German history in the period 1930 to 1960. The first panel explored different aspects of Nazi propaganda. Andrew Wackerfuss's paper examined National Socialist mythmaking, arguing that the myth of the "unknown stormtrooper" defended the Nazis' historical claims and reinforced a connection between National Socialism and the family, religion, and the state. But, he contended, the myth was more than just propaganda; it created political reality in its own right by teaching Nazi adherents forms of action they could apply to their daily political activities, thus reifying the content of the original myth itself. Waltraud Sennebogen analyzed the genesis and implementation of the "Gesetz zum Schutz der nationalen Symbole" (Law for the protection of national symbols, May 1933) as a case study of a clash between marketing and propaganda interests in the Third Reich. The Nazi regime's measures against "national Kitsch" reflected the party's claim to the exclusive use of its propaganda symbols, especially the swastika and the person of Hitler. But Sennebogen's examination of the local implementation of this law demonstrated that this "propaganda monopoly" met with considerable recalcitrance in business circles and could only be established very gradually.

The second panel examined the role of the medium of film in Nazi Germany. Valentina Leonhard analyzed how Nazi film policy sought to counter the dominant economic and cultural position of Hollywood cinema on the world market. Although Nazi officials in charge of film policy were actually quite ambivalent about Hollywood films, their main strategy was to challenge the American influence by creating a new kind of "European film"—and a European film market—as part of the "new order" of Europe. This strategy failed, however, because any credibility that the "Europeanization" project might have had was undermined by

aggressive Germanization efforts. Christelle Le Faucheur presented a close reading of the film *Kora Terry* (dir. Georg Jacoby, 1940) featuring Marika Röck, one of the stars of the Third Reich. Arguing for an alternative reading of the film's ideological message, Le Faucheur sought to show that Third Reich feature films can be read as mirrors of the Nazi regime's conflicts and ambivalences regarding women and questions of sexuality.

The third panel dealt with different aspects of the Second World War. Andreas Jasper introduced his project on the war experiences of German soldiers in World War II. After reflecting on the methodological problems involved in using soldiers' letters as historical sources, Jasper offered some preliminary theses on the key differences in the war experiences of German soldiers on the Eastern and Western fronts, and between soldiers on the front and those posted behind the front lines. Eugene Powers's paper examined the German army's brutal fight against so-called "Partisanen" on the Eastern front during the Second World War. Analyzing army narrative constructions about the ringleaders and partisan combatants, Powers argued that the German army's "partisan war" in World War II was not a new phenomenon, but continued the army's practices from two previous "ideological wars," the Franco-Prussian War and the First World War.

The fourth panel was devoted to the Holocaust and genocide. Juliane Brauer examined the musical activities of Czech students in the concentration camp Sachsenhausen in order to reveal the important role that collective and individual singing and music played in the physical and psychological survival of this group of inmates. By exploring the role of music, Brauer sought to get at the difficult question of how one group of inmates experienced daily life in a concentration camp and what their coping mechanisms were. Alexander Korb discussed the Ustaša's persecution of Serbs in Croatia, which became radicalized as a result of new agreements with the Nazi regime in June 1941. On balance, however, Korb argued that German influence should not be overestimated, as the violence against Serbs and Jews—portrayed as a mortal danger for the Croat state—was mostly the result of the interplay of local dynamics with actions of the Croat state.

The fifth panel presented two very different approaches to military history. Emre Sencer's paper examined the responses of the German and Turkish officer corps to the domestic and international challenges facing them at the turn of the 1930s. Despite significant differences between the two regimes, the two officer corps developed similar postures toward the world around them. While the German military establishment chose to agree with a dangerous option that promised to solve its problems, the Turkish military, struggling with the loss of empire and the difficult task

of modernization, tried to adapt to the new environment by underlining its strengths. Moving into the postwar era, Kathy Nawyn's paper studied the impact of restrictions on the wearing of German uniforms during the American occupation of Germany. Although Nawyn identified strong indigenous forces that weakened the role uniforms had played in German society, she concluded that the American measures helped to strengthen existing pressures and assisted in the process of recasting the connotations of "the uniform."

The history of science formed the subject of the sixth panel. Per Leo examined the history of graphology in Nazi Germany from two different angles. On the one hand, he used graphology as a case study to illuminate the relationship of Ludwig Klages to the Nazi regime, by focusing not on Klages the proto-Nazi ideologue but on Klages the scholar and practitioner, who used ideology to resolve practical conflicts by authoritarian means. On the other hand, Leo used his study of graphology to get at the paradoxical role of personal individuality in the Nazi regime, arguing that individuality actually enjoyed a heightened status in the Third Reich. Katja Limbächer investigated the political implications of National Socialist "racial hygiene" by studying the activities of the Frankfurt *Pflegeamt* during the Nazi regime. Noting that this Frankfurt welfare office managed to expand while much communal welfare was in decline after 1933, Limbächer argues that this expansion became possible because the female welfare workers not only adapted to racial-hygiene ideology but actively engaged in eugenic measures, including the forced sterilization of women under their care.

The seventh panel consisted of two papers on different facets of the history of popular culture and religiosity in the period 1945–60. Monica Ann Black explored how Berliners struggled not only with the Nazi system's collapse but also with the realization that the millions of German deaths in the war had been in vain. While other historians have suggested that Germans abandoned the war dead along with a now discredited past, Black argued that the mentality of postwar Berlin was shaped significantly by memories of and fantasies about the dead, which became ways of making sense not only of the experience of mass death but of Berliners' own postwar condition. Joel Davis examined inter-confessional relations in postwar West Germany through an analysis of a particular incident of confessional conflict in June 1953. While others have argued that the experience of persecution during the Third Reich brought the Protestant and Catholic churches closer together and paved the way for ecumenical reforms in the 1960's, Davis concluded that the years between 1945 and 1960 were rife with confessional tension.

The final panel featured two papers on the subject of Germany's relations with East and West in the interwar and postwar periods. Elana

Passman's paper explored competing strategies to resolve the Franco-German problem in the interwar era by examining the initiatives of the Mayrisch Komitee, an organization comprised of leading businessmen, former politicians, and intellectuals who championed economic entente and cultural rapprochement. Although the Komitee failed to override antagonisms, Passman argued, it developed organizational structures, conceptual frameworks, and personal relationships that would underlie later efforts at interwar understanding, wartime collaboration, and post-war reconciliation. Nadine Freund presented a critical analysis of the postwar German women's periodical *Stimme der Frau* in the context of the beginnings of the Cold War. The journal's discourse about the suffering of German women during and after the war, Freund argued, drew a highly negative picture of the Soviet Union, which it presented not as a victim of German aggression but as an aggressor against German women, while the war actions of the Western powers were hardly mentioned. This kind of coverage ensured the continuity of existing anti-Russian sentiments in the German population.

The prominence of cultural history that characterized previous seminars continued this year, with papers examining the role of myth, film, music, popular science, and death. More surprising was the considerable interest in military history, especially in what has been called the "new military history," as evidenced by papers on the experience of soldiers, the mentality of the officer corps, and the cultural meaning of uniforms. In terms of scale, many of the projects could be described as micro-histories or case-studies. Among the questions that were most frequently raised in the discussions of the papers were the twin-questions "what is Nazi-specific?" and: "what are the continuities" with developments before 1933 and after 1945? How different, for example, was the popular literature about SA men from the popular Catholic or youth movement literature? Was the Nazi "Partisanenkrieg" primarily the result of Nazi indoctrination or a manifestation of long-term continuities in the German military culture? Was the portrayal of female sexuality in Nazi films a continuation of the sexualization of women in the Weimar period or somehow different? Were the interconfessional conflicts after 1945 above all a return to Weimar conflicts or a response to developments under National Socialism?

The prevalence of cultural history also regularly provoked two other questions: First, how to connect the cultural to the social; that is, the relevance of cultural history for social history. What does the portrayal of women in Nazi films, for instance, tell us about gender relations and sexuality in the Nazi years? And second, how to connect the specific to the general; that is, the question of how representative the projects' case studies were. Looking for a theme among a very diverse set of papers, the

seminar's concluding discussion noted that many of the papers "historicized" the Nazi period, in the general sense of deemphasizing the period's exceptional character and exploring "normal" aspects of life under the Third Reich. There was no general difference between German and American papers regarding their historical approaches or topics. Each group, however, tended to focus on the historiography written in their own language. This led to a closing plea – to both groups – to pay closer attention to the historical literature being produced on the other side of the Atlantic.

Richard F. Wetzell

### Participants and their Paper Topics:

MONICA BLACK (University of Virginia), *Death's Crisis of Meaning and the Remaking of Berlin, 1945–1949*

JULIANE BRAUER (FU Berlin), *"Auf Wiedersehen in besseren Zeiten"—Musik der tschechischen Studenten als Alltagsstrategie im Konzentrationslager Sachsenhausen*

JOEL DAVIS (University of Missouri), *Inter-confessional Relations in Postwar West Germany, 1945–1960*

NADINE FREUND (UNIVERSITÄT KASSEL), *Weiblichkeit und Westintegration*

ANDREAS JASPER (Universität Tübingen), *Kriegserfahrungen im Osten und Westen*

ALEXANDER KORB (Humboldt Universität, Berlin), *Verschränkte Genozide? Der Massennord an Serben und Juden im Unabhängigen Staat Kroatien, 1941–42*

CHRISTELLE LE FAUCHEUR (University of Texas), *Ambiguous Screening/ Alternative Reading of Sexuality in the Third Reich: Consuming the femme fatale in Kora Terry* (Georg Jacoby, 1940)

PER LEO (Humboldt Universität), *Normale Unterschiede. Ludwig Klages und die wissenschaftliche Graphologie in Deutschland, 1930–1940*

VALENTINA LEONHARD (FU Berlin), *Film-Europa (1937–1945): Europäischer Film und Amerikanisierung in der nationalsozialistischen Filmpolitik*

KATJA LIMBÄCHER (TU Berlin), *Kontinuitäten der Diskriminierung "asozialer" Mädchen im Nationalsozialismus und in der bundesdeutschen Nachkriegszeit. Gefährdetenfürsorge und Pflegeamtsarbeit: Ambivalenzen weiblicher Fürsorge zwischen Zuwendung, Norm und Ausgrenzung*

KATHY NAWYN (UNC Chapel Hill), *Getting the Uniform Out of the German: Cultural Demilitarization and Restrictions on Uniform Wearing in American-Occupied Württemberg-Baden, 1945–1949*

ELANA PASSMAN (UNC Chapel Hill), *Visions of Rapprochement: The May-risch Komitee Between Enlightened Self-Interest and Hope*

EUGENE POWERS (University of Northern Illinois), *Partisan War 1941–42: Volkskrieg, Ringleaders, and Criminals*

EMRE SENCER (Ohio State University), *The Military Press in Germany and Turkey at the Turn of the 1930s*

WALTRAUD SENNEBOGEN (Universität Regensburg), *Der Konflikt zwischen Marketing und Propaganda. Eine Fallstudie zum nationalsozialistischen 'Gesetz zum Schutz der nationalen Symbole'*

ANDREW WACKERFUSS (Georgetown University), *Dem unbekanntem SA Mann*