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## Review of *The Cultural Roots of National Socialism*, by Hermann Glaser

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ends by showing how, after two years of trial, error, and good intentions, Social Democracy returned in June 1920 to its traditional, familiar, and therefore "safe" prewar stance: political opposition.

The story, as the author ably shows, is tragic. Germany's Socialists inherited the power of government unexpectedly as a result of a revolution not of their own making. When the decisive moment arrived they were split into two parties; worse, they were unprepared for the tasks ahead. Neither the SPD nor USPD had planned politically for what to do if power should fall to them, nor did they possess enough qualified persons to fill governmental posts. As a result, the two years in power—in which the USPD after December 1918 no longer shared—were marked by *Zerrissenheit*, halfway measures, and dubious policies. Divisiveness was everywhere: between SPD and USPD, provisional government and council movement, Reich government and federal states, among others. Although committed to a socialist program that predated the war, Social Democracy in power failed to carry out most of its provisions, including socialization of industries. To govern meant for the SPD in particular to "react to national catastrophes" (p. 445); it never welcomed power as the fulfillment of a long-desired objective.

Unpreparedness to deal effectively with foreign and domestic crises runs through the account like a red thread, and while the author argues convincingly that extenuating circumstances were responsible for failure to handle the former, she comes down hard on the SPD's unimpressive record with regard to the latter. The party was unprepared for, and unable to deal with, the increasing radicalism of the masses in the spring and summer of 1919, the result of discrepancies between expectations and actual achievements of the revolution. These discrepancies the party failed to eliminate, though it had created them by its prewar propaganda and its postwar policies. A socialist government that evaded socialization and did not impose democratization on bureaucracy, judiciary, or the army (whose repressive measures against radical workers, sanctioned by the SPD, created particular resentment) was bound to lose credibility. Throughout 1919 and early 1920 discontented workers flocked into the USPD, which, although the "party of protest" throughout, proved unable to exploit this human windfall because it suffered from internal division and indecisive leadership.

Throughout her book the author has struck an admirable balance, both between narrative and interpretation and in her presentation of achievements and shortcomings of Germany's first socialist experiment in government. She has visited fifteen archives in six countries, and her bibliography of published sources as well as her statistical appendixes are exemplary. While the book offers no star-

tingly new discoveries, it is more than a synthesis of existing studies in that the author's archival research adds many new insights to specific aspects of the topic. The one weakness, the sketchy presentation of relations between SPD and its Weimar Coalition partners during 1919–20, is a minor flaw in view of her overall achievement.

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HERMANN GLASER. *The Cultural Roots of National Socialism*. Translated by ERNEST A. MENZE. Austin: University of Texas Press. 1978. Pp. 289. \$12.95.

Hermann Glaser's well-known polemic, *Spießler-Ideologie*, originally published in 1964, is here translated and edited for an American public. In this, as in a great many other writings over the last fifteen years, Glaser laments the decline of the German intellectual traditions of the early nineteenth century. By 1850 or so, he believes, the ideas of the Classical and Romantic periods had come to be misunderstood or emptied of meaning, resulting in philistine mediocrity throughout German intellectual life.

This perversion of ideas into pseudo-ideas is, according to Glaser, central to an understanding of National Socialism, a thesis he defends by juxtaposing, more or less at random, quotations from men as diverse in time, status, and talent as Wagner, Rilke, Treitschke, Arndt, Wilhelm II, Ernst Jünger, and, of course, Adolf Hitler. Such juxtapositions, the author claims, demonstrate the "structural" similarities between the thought of Hitler and that of various nineteenth- and early twentieth-century writers on such subjects as the nation, Jews, sex, family, youth, blood, leadership, home town, and so on. The author rarely pauses to analyze his quoted materials or to discuss their provenance, nor does he confront questions of historical development or change. The book is, then, a compendium of selected clichés of literature and public oratory and depends for effect not on argument but on reiteration. It is not history, nor is it intended to be: Glaser describes it as an attempt to redefine what is acceptable in the German intellectual tradition, so that contemporaries may reclaim it "without qualms of conscience." But, since Glaser excels in poking fun at clichés, not much emerges as acceptable beyond what is vaguely described as "German warmth, German spirit and German culture" (p. 13).

Glaser, an official in the education department of the City of Nuremberg, is a pithy and popular writer. His works, which include attacks on the provincialism of the right (*Kleinstadt-Ideologie* [1969], *Der Gartenweg in der Boutique* [1973]) and on radical

youth groups of the left (H. Glaser ed., *Jugend-Stil, Stil der Jugend* [1971]), give considerable insight into the intellectual and ideological quandaries that have faced Germans of the moderate left in the last two decades. Ernest A. Menze's introduction discusses the book in this light, but the usefulness of this edition would have been greatly increased had he commented at greater length on the controversies Glaser's work has aroused—on its context and contemporary significance. Glaser's volume is of interest to students of current patterns in German thought; it is not, despite the unfortunate English title, either a serious or significant study of the origins of National Socialism. Apart from the title, the translation is adequate, but it loses both the shrill tone and the pungent vigor of the original.

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ULRICH DUNKER. *Der Reichsbund jüdischer Frontsoldaten, 1919–1938: Geschichte eines jüdischen Abwehrvereins*. Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1977. Pp. 354. DM 48.

Based on a Free University of Berlin doctoral thesis, Ulrich Dunker's book expands the literature of twentieth-century Jewish resistance to anti-Semitism. The *Reichsbund jüdischer Frontsoldaten* (RjF), a 35,000-member "defense league," was the second-largest Jewish organization in interwar Germany. Less influential than either the larger *Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischer Glaubens* (CV) or the more activist *Zionistische Vereinigung*, the RjF's history, according to the author, offers new insight into the failure of the "German-Jewish symbiosis" (pp. 9, 185). Because the RjF's archives were destroyed by the Nazis, Dunker has searched *Reich, Land*, and municipal records in East and West Germany; testimonies of former members in Israel, North and South America; RjF publications; and extensive secondary literature.

Though rooted in the Second Reich, the RjF was an outgrowth of the new, more virulent anti-Semitism of World War I: the Jews, made the scapegoat for prolonged war and the blockade, for defeat and revolution, were denounced as profiteers, traitors, and, especially, for shirking military service. The RjF was founded on February 8, 1919, to defend the honor of Jewish front soldiers, their right, and that of all German Jews, to be accepted as full-fledged citizens. It began with fifty-one veterans who had been rejected by *völkisch* servicemen's organizations and discouraged by the CV. Stressing its German nationalism, the RjF fought the Spartacists, patrolled Hamburg during Christmas 1920, and accompanied the Free Corps in Upper Silesia. Led by Reserve Captain Dr. Leo Loewenstein, by

1925 it grew to five hundred local and sixteen regional organizations, with a national assembly and twelve-member governing board, consisting of attorneys, professors, a journalist, and one estate owner. Its newspaper, *Der Schild*, preached comradeship, courage, and austerity.

Dunker divides RjF defense tactics into the "deed" and the "word." During the November 1923 attacks on Berlin Jews (triggered by agitators as well as inflation and unemployment), the RjF armed, protected synagogues, and fought the assailants. It promoted self-defense through sports, boxing, and gymnastic societies, sponsored agricultural settlements, and led patriotic demonstrations. When anti-Semitic incidents mounted through the "prosperity years" 1925–28, it joined the secret, paramilitary *Jüdischer Abwehr Dienst* (JAD).

Its propaganda (*Aufklärungsarbeit*) aimed at disarming anti-Semitism with facts, cited the war record to prove that Jews were neither cowardly nor "unproductive." The RjF published books, trained speakers, and printed posters with *völkisch* language and iconography, including an "Appeal to German Mothers." Its most ambitious venture was a 1932 list of ten thousand Jewish war dead. An "unpolitical" organization that shunned Jewish affairs (especially Zionism) and confined itself to opposing anti-Semitism, it developed no strategy to halt Nazism's spread or to defend the Weimar Republic.

After Hitler seized power, the RjF grew, reorganized into an authoritarian structure, and publicly supported the regime. Its early, spectacular triumph—Jewish veterans were exempted from removal from the Civil Service—was nullified by the Nuremberg laws. Its *raison d'être* evaporated when all Jews were excluded from the *Wehrmacht*. Transformed from ardent nationalists to persecuted Jews, RjF refugees were aided by Zionists and by English-Jewish servicemen's groups. Banned by the Gestapo, the RjF ended at *Kristallnacht*, when resisters disappeared into concentration camps.

Dunker balances criticisms of the RjF's elitist and defensive tactics under Weimar and its doomed opportunism under Hitler with the assertion that its basic aims were shared by many German Jews, even after 1933. Yet, the average RjF member remains a stereotype: had he other loyalties that occasionally conflicted with the organization's ideal? How did he compare with his French, English, or American counterpart? Dunker concludes that the RjF's ultimate assimilationist goal might have succeeded in "more tranquil times" except for the "unique historical process" that brought Hitler to power (p. 185), but his evidence suggests a more pessimistic conclusion.

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