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Lions and Lambs: Conflict in Weimar and the Creation of Post-Nazi Germany.

By Noah Benezra Strote.

New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017. Pp. xiv+358. \$40.00.

Why did West Germans slowly turn democratic after 1945? Many historians have addressed this question by pointing to external influences, especially allied occupation policies and cultural transfers. They have spoken of “Americanization” or, broadening the perspective to include mostly British connections, “Westernization” (Anselm Doering-Manteuffel). Other scholars have highlighted internal transformations of German society that finally rendered industrial modernity acceptable, leading to a “liberalization” of norms and values by the late 1950s (Ulrich Herbert). Both lines of enquiry have also been pursued by intellectual historians. They, too, stress either external influences, as in Michael Hochgeschwender’s and Volker Berghahn’s studies of American attempts to win the “intellectual Cold War,” or indigenous developments, for instance in Sean Forner’s recent *German Intellectuals and the Challenge of Democratic Renewal*.

Noah Benezra Strote’s monograph firmly places itself in the second camp, beginning with a critique of self-satisfied narratives of American-led modernization. But whereas Forner foregrounds left-wing intellectuals who were searching for a third way between capitalism and communism, Strote’s emphasis lies on thinkers who moved to the political center after 1945—and indeed shaped it by advocating partnership and stability over the conflicts that had marked the Weimar period. His sample includes the scholar of constitutional law Gerhard Leibholz and the lawyer and political theorist Ernst Fraenkel; the economic thinkers Wilhelm Röpke, a liberal protestant, and Oswald von Nell-Breuning, a Jesuit publicist; the political scientist Arnold Bergsträsser and the social philosopher Helmut Plessner; the Jewish religious scholar Hans-Joachim Schoeps and the Protestant theologian Ernst Benz; finally, Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, the gray eminences of the Frankfurt School. All of them, Strote argues, played a key role in underpinning a moderate Federal Republic and hence found themselves targeted by student protesters in 1968.

The main body of the book traces the shift from conflict to partnership across five different themes. Chapter 1 places the liberal Leibholz’s and the socialist Fraenkel’s legal writings in the context of bitterly competing views of the constitution during the Weimar period, while chapter 6 describes how after 1945 the two scholars found common ground in the ideas of judicial review and natural law. Chapter 2 charts the depression-era “sectarian visions of the economy,” which Röpke and Nell-Breuning were unable to counterbalance; after the war, by contrast, they jointly advised the biconfessional Christian Democratic Union on creating a “social market economy,” as described in chapter 7. Chapters 3 and 8 highlight an eventual shift from a national to a Western European education, which was promoted by Plessner, a lifelong critic of the romanticized *Gemeinschaft* ideal, and Bergsträsser, who had himself started out as a staunch nationalist. Chapter 4 discusses attempts to rechristianize German culture, which tantalized Benz but threatened to sideline Jewish German nationalists such as Schoeps, whereas chapter 9 recounts how both conceptualized Christian partnership with other religions during the war and were later among the protagonists of this project. Chapter 5, somewhat confusingly given the prior focus on pairs of intellectuals, examines the difficult relationship between Christian conservatives and the Third Reich. When Horkheimer and Adorno do appear, in chapter 10, they are hardly an ideal fit with the theme of new intellectual partnerships since they had already been close collaborators for a long time. They are characterized here as loyal critics accompanying the stabilization of liberal democracy within a predominantly Christian culture that they distrusted.

Strote's emphasis on a cohort of intellectuals, born between 1890 and 1910, who began their careers in the Weimar period, emigrated or were sidelined during the Third Reich, and eventually shaped West Germany's emerging political center, is welcome. Aside from questioning narratives of American-led modernization it serves as a useful corrective to the by now conventional dichotomy between an "uncompromising generation" (Michael Wildt), born around 1900, which radicalized after the First World War and later self-nazified, and the "45ers" (Dirk Moses), ranging from Jürgen Habermas to Helmut Kohl, who experienced German defeat as teenagers and later bolstered the Federal Republic's democratic transformation. That intellectuals born around 1900 played an equally crucial part in this transformation is a point that the author briefly scores (11–12, 221) but could have made more of. Instead, he treads on thinner ice when aiming to reinterpret the "creation of post-Nazi Germany" as a whole, based on an inevitably limited sample and kicking in an open door inasmuch as the value of "Americanization" as a historiographical concept has long been in doubt. Strote's heroes are well known and have garnered much academic attention in Germany. He does bring out some neglected aspects of their thinking, namely, regarding the importance of Christianity, but the claim on the dust cover that his book "draws from never-before-seen material" seems rather far-fetched. Demonstrating these intellectuals' cohesion as a group by way of a bold thesis is no small achievement, although precise synthetic and interpretative passages would have been more effective in bringing it home than an inclination to overgeneralize and overcontextualize. Despite these weaknesses in execution, *Lions and Lambs* convinces in its overarching thrust. And I happily join him in raising a cheer for those Germans whose experience and conviction led them to become political moderates.

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