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Know Your Enemy: The American Debate on Nazism, 1933-1945, by Michaela Hoenicke Moore

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subject headings—“Subsistence Protest, Violence, and Criminality;” “Passive Burgers, Trigger-Happy Soldiers, Distrustful Workers”—read like legends for a series of vignettes, more descriptive than analytic.

Valuable is Schumann’s questioning of the extent to which popular paramilitarism—much attention is given to the *Einwohnerwehren* studied decades ago by James Diehl—was linked to an actual willingness on the part of the bourgeoisie to practice counterrevolutionary violence. Schumann is quite right in stressing the diversity of motivations that led rural and urban burgers to sign onto paramilitary formations, and also in emphasizing the relatively nuanced attitudes (e.g., toward working-class strikes) that, if the radical right had been less successful in seizing the interpretive high ground with respect to the responsibility for the war and to the legitimacy of working-class demands, might have led to a very different outcome in Germany. Issues of gender that have figured prominently in recent scholarship on Weimar radicalism and political violence make a necessary appearance, although no one central theoretical perspective informs the study; rather, the study finds its greatest strength in a careful consideration of the various modalities of political violence, and of the consequences of that violence for the fate of the republic.

Schumann for the most part avoids the danger of reifying “political violence” into a hermetic phenomenon, separate from the battle over meaning of which it was only a part; sometimes explicit, more often implicit, in the study is the notion that struggles over public space were also simultaneously struggles over discursive space, and it is here that the study most engages with the scholarly questions of the future. In noting that political violence was the product of choices made by political actors rather than the result of irresistible forces—and by emphasizing the corollary that the destruction of the first German democracy was far from inevitable—Schumann issues a pertinent warning while making a first-rate contribution to the scholarly literature on the Weimar Republic.

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Know Your Enemy: The American Debate on Nazism, 1933–1945. By Michaela Hoenicke Moore. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2010. Pp. 390. Cloth \$85.00. ISBN 9780521829694.

Michaela Moore’s excellent new study is a deeply researched, well-written, and analytically sharp intellectual history of how Americans struggled to understand the origins of, and the extent of the German people’s responsibility for,

Nazism in the years 1933–45. It explains how the American understanding of both had important consequences for U.S. policy toward occupied Germany. And it concludes with a provocative paradox—that the United States’ success in reconstructing Germany after World War II was based on a fundamental misunderstanding of Nazism, one that underestimated its ideological fanaticism as well as the German people’s commitment to it. In showing how the Americans paradoxically ultimately got their policy right despite getting their history wrong, Moore’s book provides new confirmation of Hegel’s much-cited adage that the only thing we learn from history is that we learn nothing from history.

One of the great virtues of *Know Your Enemy* is that it exposes the blind spots in present-day American memory of World War II. If today most Americans view the conflict as a black and white battle of Allied good against Axis “evil,” Moore shows how Americans at the time of the war itself were unable to agree on what the fight against Germany was actually about. There was no single American view of Nazism and the Germans, but rather a multiplicity of competing perspectives that jostled constantly with one another for domestic dominance. In contrast to the American view of the Japanese, which was far more monolithic and saturated with undeniable racism, the American view of the Germans was far more nuanced.

Many reasons account for this fact, but an important one was that most Americans had an overwhelmingly positive image of Germany and the German people in the years prior to the Nazi takeover. Favorable attitudes toward German immigrants dating back to the nineteenth century and interwar revisionist histories that exonerated the Kaiserreich for starting World War I prevented many Americans from being too critical of the Nazi dictatorship after its establishment in 1933. Opinions thus diverged sharply in the years before World War II about how deeply Nazism was rooted in German political, social, and cultural traditions. This de facto debate about the *Sonderweg* pitted many groups and historical explanations against one another. For example, American journalists based in Europe, such as William Shirer and Edgar Ansel Mowrer, were fiercely anti-Nazi, saw Hitler’s dictatorship as having deep German roots, and tended toward an interventionist foreign policy, while the domestic American media, led by *Time Magazine* and the *Saturday Evening Post*, saw the Nazi regime as just another pragmatic great power that was best handled from an isolationist stance of nonconfrontation. Yet, even among journalists based in Germany there were disagreements, with the otherwise anti-Nazi writer Dorothy Thompson insisting on the existence of the “other Germany” and believing that fascism was not an exclusively German phenomenon.

There were further disagreements within the American political establishment and American society. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) leaned toward a *Sonderweg* explanation of Nazism, partly because of his childhood

encounters with German militarism (he briefly attended school in Germany in 1891). Yet, Roosevelt had to keep his suspicions of the German people somewhat to himself, as public opinion polls during the war repeatedly showed that a majority of Americans continued to differentiate between the German citizenry and the Nazi leadership (only five percent of Americans in 1942 believed that the U.S. was at war with the German people; sixty-two percent said they did not hate them; and sixty-seven percent in 1943 believed Germany could be easily reintegrated into the postwar order—as opposed to eight percent who believed the same about Japan). Beyond disagreements with the American people, FDR faced opposition from the War and State Departments about how to diagnose the source of, and devise a solution for, the “German problem.” In 1944, the leaders of both departments believed that Nazism derived from contingent factors, such as the unjust Versailles settlement, and did not have deep roots in German culture. They further believed in the Germans’ capacity to embrace democracy and thus called for “winning German hearts” through a mild occupation policy rooted in reconstruction (which unsurprisingly served the departments’ respective agendas of facilitating military occupation and economic revival).

It is a truism by now that this reconstructionist approach ultimately succeeded in paving the way for Germany’s ultimate rehabilitation and democratization. Yet Moore admirably strives to rescue the reputation of the losers in the debate over how to treat postwar Germany. The losing camp included the proponents of a “hard” peace, such as FDR’s Secretary of the Treasury, Henry Morgenthau, and the lobbying organization, the Society for the Prevention of World War III. They and others like them sympathized with Germany’s victims, especially the Jews, and were committed to achieving justice for the crimes perpetrated against them by the Nazi leadership and its German supporters. The hard peace camp was convinced that the Germans needed to realize they had lost the war (something they had not realized after 1918) by imposing a harsh peace upon the country, defined by policies of territorial partition and deindustrialization. Moore makes clear that the “Morgenthau Plan” was hardly the notorious expression of “revenge” that its detractors have long made it out to be and shows that it was not outside the mainstream of views within the U.S. government. Moreover, she shows how domestic American opposition to the plan was tinged with anti-Semitism (it was seen as expressive of a Jewish drive for vengeance and antithetical to Christian “charity”).

Most importantly, she shows that, however successful it may have been, the mild American policy of reconstruction “came at the cost of a general popular recognition of the true nature of the Nazi regime and the deep complicity of German society in the regime’s crimes” (p. 346). Given Moore’s assertion that “recent scholarship ... corroborates the picture of a broadly nazified society that was not easily able to shed its authoritarian ways” after 1945, it would be

interesting to know whether she thinks the success of the postwar Federal Republic occurred despite, or because of, American ignorance of the nation's true political leanings. Might history have turned out differently, with a more satisfying moral outcome, had the hard peace camp won the day and held the German people accountable for their complicity in the Nazis' crimes? By the same token, were there not major risks in the reconstructionist camp's mild approach that could have ended in catastrophe (for example, a Nazi revival and World War III, as the Society for the Prevention of World War III continued to warn about well into the 1950s)? Such all-too-historical questions are impossible to answer with any certainty. Yet, they deserve to be kept in mind, for they help us resist Whiggish views of Germany's postwar success and remind us of its moral price tag.

In the end, readers of *Know Your Enemy* may remain uncertain whether it ultimately mattered that American policy makers never really "knew" the German enemy. Yet the book provides a great service by prompting us to think more deeply about where history ultimately stands in the spectrum between utility and liability.

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The Reluctant Revolutionary: Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Collision with Prusso-German History. By John A. Moses. Berghahn Books: New York. 2009. Pp. 298, Appendices, Bibliography, and Index. Cloth \$90.00. ISBN 978-1-84545-531-6.

John A. Moses has undertaken a seemingly monumental task: that of explaining in one concise volume the special path that Dietrich Bonhoeffer pursued. His work is not a biography of Bonhoeffer per se, nor is it an attempt to define Bonhoeffer as a churchman-resister. Rather, it is an attempt to reveal how Bonhoeffer's thought became revolutionary both politically and theologically, allowing him to make a break with his social and cultural upbringing. To that end, Moses must combine the disciplines of both theology and history to highlight successfully just how revolutionary Bonhoeffer became.

Chapter one sets the scene by exploring the "Sonderweg" or "peculiarity" of the relationship between the educated German middle classes (*Bildungsbürgertum*) and their Prussian state government. This special relationship meant extreme deference to authority, near-absolute trust in governmental authority, and the belief that the state was the guarantor of order. Under the teachings of Martin