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# Democratization and the Jews: Munich, 1945-1965, by Anthony D. Kauders

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## Peer Reviewed

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*The Impact of Nazism* testifies both to the influence of Gerhard Weinberg as a teacher and mentor and to the creativity of his students and fellow scholars who contributed to this volume. The book will interest experts in the specific fields it addresses. It will also give the general reader and undergraduate student an excellent introduction to important debates on Nazi Germany and its legacy.

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*Democratization and the Jews: Munich, 1945–1965.* By Anthony D. Kauders. Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press. 2004. Pp. 326. \$60.00. ISBN 0-8032-2763-9.

In exploring the Germans' confrontation with the Nazi past, many if not most scholars have taken a distinctly national perspective, focusing on the ways that the governments of the Federal Republic and the DDR after 1945 pursued various broad-ranging legal, political, and cultural strategies to deal with the Third Reich's burdensome legacy. Anthony Kauders, by contrast, adopts a more local approach in this interesting, if somewhat misleadingly titled, volume, exploring the subject of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* as it was pursued in Munich during the first two decades after the end of World War II.

One of Kauders' primary objectives in his book is to determine the causal connection between the Germans' postwar adoption of liberal democratic ideals and their learning of moral-political lessons from the Holocaust. In attempting to determine what he concisely calls the "the relationship between 'coming to terms with the past' and democratization" (p. 4), Kauders focuses on the various ways in which political and religious elites in Munich—specifically the leaders of the SPD, CSU, and FDP, as well as the Catholic and Protestant churches—reacted during the years 1945 to 1965 to the Nazi regime's crimes against the Jews. In so doing, Kauders seeks not only to illuminate the broader dynamics of democratization, but to determine the validity of two other long-standing scholarly beliefs: the idea that the Germans largely "repressed" the experience of the Nazi dictatorship during the first postwar decades, and the notion that they adopted a largely "philosemitic" approach in thinking about, and dealing with, Jews.

Kauders, not surprisingly, finds great variation in the reactions of political and religious elites to the Holocaust. The most admirable responses, in his view, came from the SPD, whose representatives were among the first to proclaim a connection between opposing anti-Semitism and promoting democratic values.

The CSU and FDP, by contrast, remained mired in older anti-Semitic stereotypes for a good number of years after 1945, as did the Catholic and Protestant churches. Thus, while both political parties tended to blame postwar anti-Semitism on the illegal black market economic activities of Jewish displaced persons, both churches preserved longstanding supersessionist views of Judaism, implicitly attributing the Jews' historical suffering to their failure to accept Jesus Christ as their savior. Both the CSU and FDP as well as the Catholic and Protestant church establishment, moreover, strove in the early years after the war to defend Germany's national reputation by relativizing and universalizing the Nazis' epochal crimes, whether by comparing them to the "crimes" of the Allies or blaming them on broader movements like Enlightenment secularism. In making these points, Kauders convincingly challenges the notions that the Germans repressed the past and viewed the Jews from a philosemitic perspective.

Kauders goes on to argue that these strategies of avoidance and denial began to wane in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Pointing to the emergence of a new generation of political leaders in the local SPD (Hans-Jochen Vogel), CSU (Franz Josef Strauss), and FDP (Hildegard Hamm-Brücher), as well as to the role of neo-Nazi vandalism and the Eichmann trial in alerting Germans to the latent dangers of ignoring the recent past, he argues that the political parties and churches all began to speak out more vociferously in support of an ethically informed reckoning with the Nazi era. In making this claim, Kauders successfully shows that the German confrontation with the Nazi past had already begun some time before the efforts of the more politically engaged 1968 generation.

Kauders has a bit more difficulty, however, settling the issue that putatively stands at the book's core: Namely, the relationship between the emergence of a genuine liberal democratic culture in postwar Germany and the learning of lessons from the Nazi past. While he certainly shows a correlation between *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* and democratization over time, Kauders never really decisively establishes a causal link between them, in the process failing to prove his introductory claim that "liberal democracy in West Germany . . . emerged [at least in part] out of the growing awareness that the Shoah should be treated as the gravest of possible assaults on democratic society." Kauders' evidence, while ample, is ultimately quite conflicting; while it reveals that the SPD energetically promoted the link between memory and democratization, for example, it also shows that the CSU and FDP for most of the period argued the exact opposite—namely, that drawing moral lessons from the past would impede Germany's democratic development. (This, Kauders notes, was the main reason that both parties called for an early end to denazification). Kauders, in short, might have done more to reconcile such conflicting evidence a bit more clearly. Moreover, he could have spared himself the difficult challenge of

establishing a causal connection between democratization and memory had he (or the press) titled his book somewhat differently. Despite its title, *Democratization and the Jews* is less a book about politics than about Vergangenheitsbewältigung. After leading the reader to expect a rigorous exploration of the role of the latter in influencing the former, it largely (if quite cogently) deals with the latter for its own sake.

Finally, Kauders might have offered some sharper conclusions on the matter of the book's subtitle: Munich. While he draws considerable evidence attesting to the views of local politicians and clergymen, he could have more clearly established whether they were representative of broader German trends or were unique to the Munich environment. One might suspect, for example, that the city's special identity in the Third Reich as the *Hauptstadt der Bewegung* would have played some sort of a role in shaping postwar German responses to the Jews. But the reader does not learn much about this particular issue. Kauders does nicely explore the unique circumstances of Jewish victims of the Third Reich in the city (most notably in pointing to their enormous numbers and difficult living situation), but he might have illustrated the specific local dimensions of what could be called the milieu of the perpetrators in more detail. In the end, *Democratization and the Jews* is a worthwhile study that offers a good number of interesting findings, but it will fall to other scholars to determine their broader relevance.

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*Dealing with the Devil: East Germany, Détente, and Ostpolitik, 1969–1973.* By M. E. Sarotte. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press. 2001. Pp. xxii + 295. \$19.95 (paper). ISBN 0–8078–4915–4.

Walking the less traversed side of the street, M. E. Sarotte uses Eastern sources to ascertain how the Socialist Unity (SED) regime interpreted its participation in the détente era's negotiations about Germany. Whereas much recent scholarship about the German Democratic Republic (GDR) challenges earlier perceptions of overweening Soviet control over policy and asserts that the Soviets were often pressured into action by their client, Sarotte finds considerable evidence in this instance of "Soviet micromanagement" (p. 170). Tension between Soviet and East German conceptions of their interests, she concludes, was typically resolved in favor of the Soviets. Equally striking is how accurately American national security advisor Henry Kissinger and West German