

Deppisch, Sven: *Täter auf der Schulbank. Die Offiziersausbildung der Ordnungspolizei und der Holocaust*. Baden-Baden: Tectum - Der Wissenschaftsverlag 2017. ISBN: 978-3-8288-4050-8; 675 S.

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Among the groups of German men directly involved in the perpetration of the „final solution“, none was as multi-functional and none remains as under-researched as the order police (Ordnungspolizei). Formally integrated in mid-1936 into Himmler's sprawling executive apparatus, this institution grew until the war's end to comprise roughly three million members and participated in the full spectrum of Nazi Germany's measures against alleged „enemies of the Reich“, ranging from surveillance and arrests of Jews, Sinti and Roma and others in the Reich to their deportation and mass murder in occupied Eastern Europe. Despite the scope and intensity of its genocidal role, after the war the order police escaped legal scrutiny. German society's disinclination to accept the fact that Holocaust perpetration was not restricted to a few hard-core Nazis in the ranks of the SS in combination with organized, highly successful attempts by former order police leaders to distort their and their men's war-time record allowed even members of police battalions implicated in the mass murder of Jewish men, women, and children to pursue their career, unmolested by criminal charges, in the ranks of the West German police until retirement.

Since the turn of the millennium, historiography has made great strides in unearthing the deadly war-time effectiveness of order police violence. It is doubly ironic that post-war judicial files attest to these crimes as well as to the West German justice system's failure of prosecuting them adequately while it took historians decades to make full use of this massive body of documentation to expose the image of the „clean order police“ as fabrication. The publication of Christopher Browning's *Ordinary Men* 25 years ago prompted intense efforts to address the interrelated questions of how and why German policemen participated in the Holo-

caust. The book by Sven Deppisch continues these efforts by focusing on the training of order police leaders before and during the war, a group he clearly separates in his main title from Browning's „ganz normale Männer“. Against the background of a solid summary of the available literature and sources on the issue, the history of policing in Germany prior to and after the Nazi era, and the pre-1935 training of officers, Deppisch provides the first thorough investigation into the means and methods devised by Kurt Daluege's Hauptamt Ordnungspolizei to train career officers in the context of Himmler's institutional framework. His main focus is on the Polizeischule Fürstenfeldbruck where, in the picturesque surroundings of the Bavarian countryside, between early 1937 and May 1945 more than 2,100 officers were trained. The almost 1,700 successful participants, together with a slightly larger number of finalists from analogous schools in Berlin-Köpenick and elsewhere, went on to command order police battalions and stationary posts all across the Reich and the occupied parts of Europe.

With his meticulous depiction of officer schooling at Fürstenfeldbruck and beyond, Deppisch complements earlier studies of Daluege's teachers, the SD, security police, and SS by Jens Banach, Hans-Christian Harten and others on the question how relevant training, and particularly ideological indoctrination („weltanschauliche Erziehung“, „nationalsozialistische Schulung“), was for these men to become perpetrators of the Holocaust. Deppisch wisely cautions readers against expecting his study to prove a causal correlation between discriminatory prejudice and genocidal practice (p. 40), but identifies an institutionally ingrained obsession with fighting organized disobedience and unrest (Bandenkampf, first in the Reich, later in occupied Europe) as a factor specific to the order police: already since the 1920s, police officers were trained to uphold „law and order“ against militant, particularly left-leaning opponents. Supplemented by Nazi notions of racial superiority vis-à-vis Jews, Slavs, and others, by the regime's grasp for imperial domination and by an initially imagined yet increasingly daunting partisan threat

in the East, this mindset, Deppisch argues (pp. 572–580), played a major role in turning Daluege's officers into efficient genocidaires. What that meant in concrete terms is impressively explicated in the book's chapters devoted to the careers of the Fürstenfeldbruck training staff, most of which had little problems in executing the Nazi agenda during the war and in denying having done so after 1945. Among the school's students was Julius Wohlauf, prominently featured by Browning as company commander of Reserve Police Battalion 101 and mass killer of Jews in occupied Poland. Wohlauf attended Fürstenfeldbruck for almost all of 1937 and after the war led traffic schooling in the top ranks of the Hamburg police; his case stands out primarily due to his sentencing in 1968 by a Hamburg court to a prison term Deppisch aptly characterizes as „lächerlich gering“ (p. 487).

The book's detailed insights into the mechanics of order police training outweigh its explanatory value in regard to the bigger picture. Based on his sample, Deppisch identifies the vast majority of order police officer trainees as members of the SS, the Nazi party and one of its branch institutions (pp. 471–77); still, further study is needed to clarify how order police training compares to that of other parts in Himmler's realm of influence. If *Bandenkampf* was something German policemen had been trained for prior to the Nazi rise to power, how did their actions differ from those by members of other institutions involved in anti-partisan warfare? Moreover, despite many findings by scholars such as Klaus-Michael Mallmann, Christoph Spiecker, and Edward Westermann, our comprehension of the intricacies of *esprit de corps* within the Third Reich's executive apparatus, its origins, evolution and relevance for participation in habitual mass violence remains partial. Rightly criticizing older works for neglecting to address the full police curriculum, Deppisch rarely transcends the confines of formalized schooling. He references in passing the work by Rafael Behr¹ on „police versus cop culture“ (pp. 46–7, 563) and points to *Habitus* and *Kameradschaft* (pp. 566–571), but does not elaborate on their relevance. Similarly, he merely hints at experiential, emotional and other crucial bonding

mechanisms, despite the importance the SS- and police leadership ascribed to them. As Himmler put it in an order issued at a crucial point in Holocaust history, the psychological effects of subjecting „enemies of the German people“ to „the just death sentence“ called for leading the men „into the beautiful regions of German spiritual and cultural life“ by holding „comradely get-togethers (*kameradschaftliches Beisammensein*)“ – a license for parties and drinking orgies that would produce more violence.²

While Deppisch says little about informal aspects of daily life at Fürstenfeldbruck, he offers glimpses, most notably in the form of post-war statements by alumni. Those accounts attest to the enduring strength of networking and experiential bonding, not just for the purpose of judicial exculpation, but for invoking a shared past tainted by complicity. When participants of the 1937/38 training course gathered in 1988 in the Bavarian town to commemorate their 50th anniversary with reminiscences and speeches, one of the veterans mentioned the „solution of the Jewish question“ – not as a crime these policemen had committed, but as a great mental burden for the German people („Für das deutsche Volk eine grosse seelische Belastung“, p. 492). We know from other instances of genocide that for men to become genocidal killers, hatred of out-groups is less important than willingness to function as part of one's in-group; consequently, the environment within which order policemen and other Holocaust perpetrators acted, particularly in the violence-permeated German East, requires as much attention as formal training. Deppisch provides a groundbreaking work on the latter; on the spatial, social and mental setting, on

¹ Rafael Behr, *Cop Culture – Der Alltag des Gewaltmonopols. Männlichkeit, Handlungsmuster und Kultur in der Polizei*, Wiesbaden 2008.

² SS-order by Himmler, December 12, 1941, quoted from Christopher Browning, with contributions by Jürgen Matthäus, *The Origins of the Final Solution: The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, September 1939–March 1942*, Lincoln 2004, p. 307; see also Edward B. Westermann, *Stone-Cold Killers or Drunk with Murder? Alcohol and Atrocity during the Holocaust*, in: *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 30, 1 (2016), pp. 1–19; idem, *Drinking Rituals, Masculinity, and Mass Murder in Nazi Germany*, in: *Central European History* 51 (2018), pp. 367–389.

the interrelation between theory and practice, Erziehung and Erlebnis, more work is needed.

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