In other words, these Republican veterans were not a movement that stood above party politics, laboring to integrate and reconcile socioeconomic and ideological differences. As Ziemann puts it—again in line with recent approaches to historical writing “from the bottom up”—the Reichsbanner and Reichsbund told the story of World War I from a “worm’s-eye perspective” when “the political right still privileged the perspectives of the generals and high-ranking officers” (p. 278). The trouble was that “in subsequent years the nationalist camp learned to adopt the worm’s-eye view for its own political purposes” (p. 278), and it did so more effectively in pursuit of its destructive anti-Republican aims. Hitler’s self-representation in Mein Kampf is, as Ziemann points out, a powerful example of this success.

However valuable Ziemann’s innovative perspectives on Reichsbanner and Reichsbund politics are, his work should be read alongside Rohe’s. After all, Rohe was also very much concerned with political culture, and he was the first to point to the birthright of the Left with respect to a mobilization from below that the Right subsequently copied. What Rohe has to say about mentalities, symbols, and rituals among left-wing Weimar veterans’ associations and their ever more violent confrontations with their right-wing opponents should be integrated into current historiography. Just because it was published in 1966 does not mean it should be ignored.

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Northwestern Germany has provided the setting for many important local studies of Nazism’s rise to power. David Imhoof turns to the same region in his analysis of culture and politics in the university town of Göttingen. His objective is to show how popular cultural practices in the 1920s helped lay the foundations for state policies in the 1930s, or, as he writes, “how cultural activities began to turn Göttingen into a Nazi town” (p. 12). The activities that he has chosen for analysis were anchored in the local network of sharpshooters’ clubs, the Händel Festival for which the town became renowned in the 1920s, and the city’s cinemas. Together, these venues offer vantage points on the cultural practices of a broad spectrum of the local citizenry. The sharpshooters were recruited from a largely lower-middle-class male constituency. The Händel Festival, which was associated with the university, attracted a more educated audience, while the movies drew a cross section of the population. Everywhere, however, prevalent attitudes and understandings of culture subverted the foundations of republican government, particularly the legitimacy of partisan conflict. In practice as well as theory, sharpshooting was an exclusive realm of male supremacy run by traditional elites in the service of military values. The Händel Festival, the subject of the most interesting chapters in the book, demonstrated that daring experimentation, including expressionist stagings of baroque opera, could itself be enlisted in the service of cultural conservatism, in this case the monumentalization of the composer as a German cultural hero. Finally, officials and cultural critics in Göttingen regarded moving pictures less as culture than mass entertainment, and they sought, as a consequence, to promote films that avoided controversial social issues and emphasized safe themes drawn from German literature and history. Imhoof argues that in stressing male control of the public realm, tradition over innovation, and unity over political dissension, the habits of mind that were cultivated in all these cultural fora promoted policies later pursued by the Nazis.

In much the same way that recent studies by Thomas Kühne and Arndt Weinrich have addressed the significance of heterogeneous popular ideas about “community” to the National Socialist project, Imhoof raises important questions about the consonance between cultural practices during the Weimar era and political ideas that were subsequently institutionalized by the National Socialists. In this case, however, a number of open questions undercut the persuasiveness of the analysis. By its own narrative logic, the process of “becoming a Nazi town” had to do with transitions, from culture to politics and from one political regime to another. The terms in which Imhoof frames these transitions are porous. The boundaries and crossings between cultural and political space are largely uncharted, as terms drawn from a political discourse, such as “right-wing,” “conservative,” “reactionary,” and “nationalist,” steer the analysis of cultural practices, producing what might best be described as a political history of cultural institutions. Nor is the role of cultural activity in the transition to the Nazi political system persuasively addressed. Cultural practices function in Imhoof’s analysis as political agents, shaping, paralleling, facilitating, promoting, bolstering, building, echoing, or otherwise supporting Göttingen’s turn into a Nazi town. The Nazis themselves are just there, representing policies and ideas that offer the telos of developments in all three categories of the cultural institutions surveyed.

A final difficulty has to do with the local context of these policies and ideas. The author’s refusal to specify what he means by a “Nazi town” leaves open, as he himself appears to intend, more questions than it answers. One of these relates to the significance of the transition (if this is in fact the right word) that took place in Göttingen in the early 1930s, particularly in light of central cultural and political continuities that extended into the city, as Imhoof emphasizes, from the nineteenth century into the 1950s. One might well conclude that Göttingen was a “Nazi town” from start to finish. The unanswered questions thus pertain to Göttingen’s Nazis as well: who they were, where they came from, and how they were affiliated with the cultural organizations that constitute the basis of this study. A closer and more
extended analysis of the associational landscape in Göttingen—the kind of analysis that was pioneered decades ago in William Sheridan Allen’s study of another town in northwestern Germany—would likely have suggested some answers to the challenging questions that this book poses.

**Roger Chickering, 
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The ways in which Jewish officials reacted to Nazi persecution have always been the subject of heated debate. The “normal” Jewish population accused many of them, especially the Jewish councils in occupied Eastern Europe, of collaboration with the Nazis. After the war there were discussions about the extent to which these councils supported the Nazis in executing their murderous plans. Then the debate changed. Researchers started asking about Jewish officials’ interpretations and their intentions. They recognized the officials’ efforts in organizing Jewish life, and emphasized that one should not assess the history of Jewish associations and councils (which were not the same institutions, but faced similar problems) based only on outcomes. We know today what they could not know then. Their strategies did not work out, but could they have known this? What were their options? How did they interpret their situation, and why did many officials cooperate even when it came to mass deportations?

Beate Meyer, one of the leading experts in the study of German Jewry under National Socialism, discusses these and other questions in her brilliant study on the Reich Association of Jews in Germany during World War II. She does not provide any simple answers. Using a wide range of sources from archives in Israel, Germany, Great Britain, and the United States, Meyer analyzes the interpretations and actions of the leading functionaries of this institution all German Jews were forced to become members of in 1939 and states that “[e]ven if I focus on the attitudes, efforts, and ultimate unavoidable failure of the German-Jewish functionaries, it is important to be ever mindful of a central fact: they did not create the situation in which they were forced to act” (pp. 1–2).

In five chapters Meyer examines the intentions and actions of the Reich Association’s leadership. In chapter 1 she describes the creation of the association in 1939 and its activities until autumn 1941, when emigration was no longer allowed and the deportations began. The second chapter, with the meaningful title “Walking on a Thin Line,” deals mainly with the Reich Association’s central office in Berlin and its relationship with the Berlin Jewish Community as the deportations were taking place. Chapter 3 explores the situation in the German countryside and the actions of the association’s regional branches. The last two chapters deal with a time when most German Jews already had been deported and killed. Chapter 4 discusses the so-called Rest-Reichsvereinigung (Residual Reich Association), the “rump organization” that was left after the Reich Association was dissolved in June 1943 and that was run by Jews in mixed marriages. And chapter 5 analyzes the postwar aftermath for those few officials who had survived and the problems they faced in both German states on account of their positions during the Holocaust, like proceedings before courts of honor.

Meyer utilizes the documents of the Reich Association itself, but also personal correspondence and memoirs. So a picture of the organization and its leaders takes shape, but also, where possible, a picture of individuals who found themselves in a terribly complicated situation and were forced to make decisions they never wanted to make. Many of them did not leave the country while they still were able to do so because they felt obliged to protect and care for the Jewish community. When the situation changed, many of them thought as Paul Eppstein did, about whom his colleague Berthold Simonsohn said: “‘It was Eppstein’s aim to maintain the autonomy of the Jewish administration as long as possible, and where feasible to prevent the worst from transpiring. But that could only be achieved if the orders were carried out in such a manner that the Gestapo found no pretext to take over their implementation itself’” (p. 44).

Like Eppstein, most of the Reich Association functionaries were deported to Theresienstadt, where many of them held privileged positions and continued working within the Jewish administration. They stood under enormous pressure and had to make terrible decisions. The continuation of functionary activity in the administration of the Theresienstadt ghetto came to an end in autumn 1944, when almost all Reich Association Jews were deported and many of them immediately murdered. Eppstein himself was arrested on September 27, 1944 and shot in the so-called Small Fortress in Theresienstadt.

Meyer has written a highly informative and fascinating study. She discusses complicated topics in a very balanced way, describing without judgment the dilemma in which both the organization and Jewish functionaries found themselves. This book is a masterpiece.

**Andrea Löw 
Institute of Contemporary History, Munich**


Jessica Reinisch has taken on the ambitious task of comparing the four Allied occupation zones of post–World War II Germany through the lens of public health. Because there is so little comparative work on all four Allied zones, she has tried both to fill this gap in more general political, social, and economic terms, and to provide new information about public health.