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Review of Mark Fenemore, *Dismembered Policing in Postwar Berlin:
The Limits of Four-Power Government*

by Emma Teworte

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MARK FENEMORE, *Dismembered Policing in Postwar Berlin: The Limits of Four-Power Government* (London: Bloomsbury, 2023), 258 pp. ISBN 978 1 3503 3416 8. £85.00

There is certainly no dearth of literature on mid twentieth-century Berlin; Mark Fenemore's most recent monograph will be placed on a bookshelf packed with works by historians such as Atina Grossmann, Annette Timm, and Malte Zierenberg. What *Dismembered Policing* does, however, is answer calls to treat the occupation of Germany as a 'subject in its own right'.¹ Fenemore analyses it as a system of rule through the lens of policing. Examining the police not only as a 'political instrument' but also as 'the organization tasked with solving crimes' (p. 10), his book can be situated among more recent studies of the *practical* functioning and impact of the police and penal system in post-war Germany.² Methodologically, Fenemore places his work within a 'history of mentalities' in which, refreshingly, he 'sees mentalities as expressed principally through behaviour rather than through discourse' (p. 3). It is from this more practical angle that Fenemore seeks to tell the story of the gradual breakdown of Allied governance in Berlin—from a city that the American (deputy) military governor Lucius Clay initially envisioned as a model for international cooperation to one that became a front line of the Cold War.

This story is told roughly chronologically, and opens with the central Police Presidium on Alexanderplatz, which, along with most of its records, had been destroyed during the war. The first chapter describes how policing had broken down exactly when crime was increasing: July 1945 saw 123 murders in the capital, compared to 350 in the three years from 1922 to 1924 (p. 22). This is not to mention the less easily quantifiable mass rapes, as well as the persistent 'stench of death' (p. 29). Somewhat questionably rehabilitating the label of

¹ Camilo Erlichman and Christopher Knowles, 'Introduction: Reframing Occupation as a System of Rule', in Camilo Erlichman and Christopher Knowles (eds.), *Transforming Occupation in the Western Zones of Germany: Politics, Everyday Life and Social Interactions* (London, 2018), 3–24, at 4.

² David M. Livingstone, *Militarization and Democracy in West Germany's Border Police, 1951–2005* (Rochester, NY, 2024); Sarah Colvin, *Shadowland: The Story of Germany Told by Its Prisoners* (London, 2022).

1945 as 'zero hour' (p. 21), Fenemore describes the first moves by the Soviets to re-establish local government. The arrival of the Western Allies in July fractured the policing situation.

The second chapter charts the rebuilding of the police. Fenemore introduces readers to a set of characters, starting with Paul Markgraf, a decorated Wehrmacht captain captured at Stalingrad, who, after attending the 'Antifa School' in captivity and writing the essay 'What I Would Do If I Was Appointed Berlin Police President', was in fact appointed to this very role in May 1945. His second-in-command, Johannes Stumm, was seen as more experienced in police matters. While cementing Soviet power, Markgraf had difficulties asserting his authority: some communists in Charlottenburg, for example, refused to serve a former *Wehrmacht* captain. Conversely, given the lack of resources to screen candidates, many of the first men to join the force would have had a past irreconcilable with the aim of denazifying the police.

This chapter also introduces readers to the women police officers who were recruited from April 1946. Aged between 23 and 30, they served alongside men, albeit for quite a short time in West Berlin; the administration stopped recruiting women officers in 1950, a ban that was only lifted in 1978. Their recruitment did not bring about a change in police culture. Moreover, women complained that they were falling ill because they were not allowed to wear trousers. Clothing proved a problem for the police in general; uniforms initially consisted only of a white armband, and dyed Wehrmacht uniforms went streaky when it rained. Fenemore showcases the importance of such practical details when it comes to policing. Indeed, it was only in March 1946 that the British and American sectors restored working street lamps. The night-time darkness in the Soviet and French zones continued to facilitate everyday crime. However, the police in all sectors faced a common problem: with police officers receiving the most ration cards, the force consequently not only saw a high turnover but also attracted criminals.

In the third chapter, Fenemore discusses not these criminals in German police uniform, but those he sees as criminals in Allied military uniforms. Occupation, he claims, was itself a source of crime, as 'often Berliners required protection from their protectors' (p. 61).

Here, Allied soldiers are presented as drunkards and rapists, with Fenemore quoting an American GI who compared Berlin to a lunatic asylum. In this book, dedicated to 'survivors of trauma, not least those who inhabited Greater Berlin in the period 1945–9' (p. v), Berliners are largely presented as victims, especially those who protested against Allied violence; the acting mayor of Reinickendorf was beaten up by the French after pointing out Allied transgressions. While Fenemore contends that Allied behaviour was 'unnecessarily harsh' (p. 74), he also maintains an awareness that it could be misconstrued. For example, when the American colonel Francis Miller accused US forces in Berlin of misconduct in August 1946, this was deeply motivated by racism against Black GIs.

This racial theme is expanded in the fourth chapter, which moves away from uniformed police and to the policing of morals. While conscious of widespread racism within German society, the chapter provides a largely favourable reading of the relationships between White German women and Black GIs; the latter were especially cordial, as they incurred harsher consequences for misconduct than their White counterparts in what was still a segregated army. Citing the recollections of numerous Black GIs, Fenemore arrives at the rather bold conclusion that for most children and some adults, these friendly interactions created 'a fundamental rupture in racial consciousness' (p. 88). He does, however, recognize that the absence of US-style segregation also may have created an 'imaginary space' (p. 92) that allowed some GIs to gloss over the extent of German racism – racism with which German women in relationships with Black soldiers often had to contend.

Chapter five turns away from the relationship between Germans and the Allies to discuss how the Allies initially cooperated with each other. While casting the Allied Kommandatura, the body ruling Berlin, as one of the most radical attempts by nations to cooperate to date, Fenemore argues the police force caused more friction 'than any other branch' of the new city government (p. 109). In October 1946, each sector was assigned an assistant police chief, usurping the authority of the Greater Berlin police president, Paul Markgraf. Initial attempts at cooperation quickly unravelled.

These tensions culminated in the splitting of the police, which the sixth chapter details. The Western Allies had tried to have Police

President Markgraf dismissed from the beginning of 1948. The Western SPD had accused him of turning a blind eye to (Soviet) kidnapping, producing a list of over 5,000 missing people. While this list was highly dubious, certain individuals had 'been disappeared' by the Soviets, including Karl Heinrich, the head of the uniformed police, in August 1945. In April 1948, Markgraf attempted to have Heinrich's successor as the West Berlin uniformed police chief arrested for insulting the Soviets. Following multiple other points of friction, including the Soviet walkout from the Kommandatura, Markgraf was suspended in July 1948. Two-thirds of the police on the ground also deserted Markgraf to follow the new West Berlin police chief, Johannes Stumm.

The seventh chapter takes readers through the 'slow and agonizing' (p. 144) death of collaboration during the summer of 1948, caused especially by crowd actions. Fenemore describes multiple Soviet-orchestrated sieges of the city's parliament, located in the Soviet sector, in which police officers and crowds sought to intimidate representatives. On 9 September, the policing of crowds again took centre-stage when Ernst Reuter gave a speech against the backdrop of the Reichstag calling for solidarity with Berliners. Berlin was then left with two mayors and two police forces, and formal police cooperation was essentially reduced to guarding the war criminals incarcerated in Spandau (until the last prisoner, Rudolf Hess, committed suicide in 1987).

Chapter eight discusses a key ingredient in souring Allied relations: the Berlin blockade. Fenemore sees the blockade and airlift as harmful to Berliners, but helpful in cementing anti-Soviet solidarity. The final two chapters of the book then return to crime and policing by exploring two high-profile criminal investigations. Examining police work on the ground allows Fenemore to show that despite political splits, the police continued to cooperate across the inner-Berlin border—underscoring the importance of an approach that moves beyond a focus on high-level policy.

The first case study tells the story of the Gladow Gang. This eclectic gang managed to steal pistols and ammunition from sixteen policemen stationed close to the border, as well as a ladder from Police Chief Stumm's Dahlem villa, which they used to burgle his neighbour's property. Fenemore is particularly interested in the ringleader, the teenaged Werner Gladow, seemingly agreeing with the court

psychiatrist Weimann that it was the ‘poisoning’ of Nazism that made him the criminal he was (p. 191). He was executed in November 1950 following an East Berlin show trial.

The final chapter brings gruesome physicality to the metaphor of the book’s title; not only was policing dismembered, but so were corpses. Fenemore’s second case study is that of a nurse with a morphine addiction, Elisabeth Kusian, who murdered two people mainly to provide her boyfriend—who, incidentally, was a Western police officer—with gifts taken from the victims. She dismembered the bodies with forensic precision and scattered their limbs across Berlin’s sectors. The East Berlin police, who arrested Kusian and took her confession, unsurprisingly politicized the affair.

With these case studies, Fenemore bridges the traditional division of labour in the historical profession whereby early modernists focus on criminals and their positionality, while modernists turn their attention to penal institutions and discourse.³ However, his analysis that we need a ‘new conceptual palette’ to understand these individuals as being ‘human and fallible’ and as having ‘produced meaningful acts’ in committing crimes (p. 232) might have been deepened by early modernist approaches to gaining greater access to perpetrators’ subjectivities and the environment they operated in.

Fenemore is, nonetheless, fully aware of modern-day criticisms of police power, citing the murder of George Floyd as emblematic of how ‘policing can also be an illegitimate expression of cruelty and disregard for life’ (p. 2). However, Fenemore’s Berlin police officers are generally admired as ‘courageous’ (pp. 23 and 49; see also p. 228). Moreover, it might have been more instructive to frame a study of post-war Berlin around the *German* police’s (racist) history across Imperial, Weimar, Nazi, and post-war Germany⁴—a history marked by continuities which Fenemore points out (p. 41) but ultimately downplays in his claim that ‘despite the all-too-real Nazi excesses, the Berlin police had a tradition of civilized policing that they could both be proud of and fall back on’ (p. 230). A consideration of how crime

³ Richard F. Wetzell, ‘Introduction’, in Richard F. Wetzell, *Crime and Criminal Justice in Modern Germany* (New York, 2014), 1–28, at 1.

⁴ See Patrick Wagner, *Hitlers Kriminalisten: Die deutsche Kriminalpolizei und der Nationalsozialismus zwischen 1920 und 1960* (Munich, 2002).

was politicized under Nazism might have also helped deconstruct the concept of 'law and order' and enrich readers' understanding of why Berliners yearned for harsher punishments (see p. 46).

When thinking of how Berliners encountered policing and crime in day-to-day life, it is surprising that everyday policing does not occupy a more prominent position in a book whose introduction cites Alf Lüdtke and E. P. Thompson as inspirations for writing histories of 'mentalities' and everyday life from below (pp. 10–11). The crime statistics Fenemore reproduces show that robbery/looting and bodily injury were by far the most frequent crimes in 1946 and 1947 (p. 22). Yet when it comes to actual policing, Fenemore is more interested in broader political events and high-profile crimes. One book, of course, cannot do everything—and *Dismembered Policing* aptly highlights how policing provides an insight into many diverse histories. The book's key contribution is thus to demonstrate how policing played a crucial role in attempts to achieve Allied cooperation, but also in their breakdown. True to its subtitle, it exposes 'the limits of four-power government'.

EMMA TEWORTE is a PhD student at the University of Oxford. Her dissertation examines criminalized abortions in Germany between the early 1930s and late 1950s, focusing particularly on what police and judicial sources reveal about the experience of terminating pregnancies illegally. Her article "'It would be better to get rid of it': Abortion and the Nazi Past in Weinheim and Garmisch, c.1951' will be published in *German History* in early 2025.