Through the Eyes of Franz Lehman: A Social History of US Military Occupation in Western Germany

By
Allison Blanning
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Submitted by:
Allison H. Blanning

Approved by:

Frances Sullivan (thesis advisor) Marc Forster (second reader)
Assistant Professor of History Henry B. Plant Professor of History
Simmons University Connecticut College
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Abstract

Through the use of a microhistorical, social history, and gendered lens approach, I use the letters of Private First-Class Franz Lehman of the American Military Government to explore how American soldiers and German civilians developed both positive and negative connections despite bureaucratic issues, subjection to propaganda, and the existence of a language gap. I also examine how the confiscation of property from German civilians and the ineffective non-fraternization ban added another level of complexity to relationships that were already uneven. I conclude that Franz Lehman presented deeply conflicting perspectives about his experiences as a German-American Jewish occupation soldier and his viewpoints on the non-fraternization ban and the nature of German civilians. I argue that interactions between German civilians and American soldiers were characterized by unexpected levels of mutual admiration and devoid of racialized viewpoints that were commonplace for Japanese civilians who lived under the American occupation.
Introduction

In May 1945, World War II concluded, with Nazi Germany defeated and the United States emerging as the most powerful of the victorious Allied powers. As dictated by the February 1945 Yalta Conference attended by Winston Churchill, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Joseph Stalin, the victors split up the spoils. They divided Germany “into four [respective] zones of occupation for the British, Americans, Soviets, and French. Each of the Allies ran their zones more or less independently for the first two years of the Allied Occupation.¹

The United States operated its zone through the Military Government, a postwar bureaucracy tasked with the restoration of economic and social order in an emerging Western Germany.² Led by American Army official Lucius D. Clay, who served as the Deputy Governor of the Military Government, ordinary soldiers, consultants, and academics descended on the American zone to transform it from a war zone into a functioning capitalist democracy. The formation and application of the policy known as denazification, in which American military occupiers attempted to reform German society through purging former Nazi officials and examinations of the wartime roles of all Germans emerged as one of the most important goals of the immediate postwar period of 1945-1947. American officials wanted to establish Western Germany into a bastion of democracy and capitalism due to growing tensions with the Soviet Union.

Issued earlier than denazification directives, the infamous non-fraternization ban outlawed any type of relationship between American GI (Government Issue) soldiers and

² Western Germany, known formally as the Federal Republic of Germany, became a recognized nation in 1949 after the three western zones of the Allies joined together. The Soviet zone evolved into the German Democratic Republic, or East Germany.
German civilians, regardless of age or gender. Developed to distance American occupiers from the formation of sexual or personal interactions with their German charges, the policy quickly disintegrated as both upper-level commanders and ground-level GIs engaged in physical relationships with German women. In this thesis I use the perspective of a Military Government occupation soldier to assert that interactions between American soldiers and German civilians were mixtures of positive and negative experiences. These relationships involved unequal power balances enforced by occupation policies, the idea of victory as a performance, and symbiotic exchanges that resulted in “cultural affinity” between occupier and occupied.³

Private First-Class Franz Lehman was a German-American Jewish GI stationed in Western Germany beginning in March 1945 and during the first year of the Military Government. He participated directly in the implementation of American occupation policies and witnessed firsthand the complicated interactions between victorious American soldiers and German civilians underscored by inconsistent occupation policies, distrust, and mutual cultural admiration. During his time in the American occupation zone, Lehman wrote 91 letters for family and friends that showed how American soldiers sympathized with German civilians and recognized elements of American society in German culture. soldiers made connections with German civilians despite exposure to propaganda that framed citizens as part of a nation that suffered from “a super-race and conquest disease.”⁴ In his letters, Lehman recounted how the societal collapse of Nazi Germany, the arrival of American soldiers, and directives such as

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³ Petra Goedde uses the phrase “cultural affinity” to describe the “racial and cultural similarities between Germans and white Americans that facilitated exchange” in GIs and Germans: Culture, Gender, and Foreign Relations: 1945-1949 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), xix.
⁴ Frank Capra, Your Job in Germany, directed by Frank Capra (1945; Washington D.C: United States War Department), film.
denazification and the non-fraternization ban affected the ways that German civilians engaged with American soldiers.

The Lehman letters offer several new perspectives. Franz Lehman’s identity as a Jewish German-American soldier stationed in the land of his relatives following World War II provides a vantage point to examine how GIs with connections to Germany regarded the links between occupier and occupied. The letters reveal that Lehman felt deeply conflicted about his role as an occupation soldier, demonstrated by his oscillating remarks that both lauded and denounced German civilians and the Military Government. Additionally, Lehman’s assignments as an organizer of requisitioned Nazi goods, archivist, and surveyor of destroyed cultural buildings, combined with his German language skills, enabled him to travel through Western Germany and interact directly with German civilians. His letters constitute a powerful historical record of how American soldiers regarded German civilians as both citizens of defeated Nazi Germany as well as members of a society that sometimes mirrored American cultural values.

My work draws upon the Lehman letters to highlight the daily experiences of American occupation soldiers as they formed positive and negative connections with German civilians in both sexual and non-sexual relationships. I will focus particularly on how American Military Government policies of denazification and non-fraternization, intended to purge former Nazis from German society and prevent interactions between soldiers and civilians, further complicated cultural connections.

My analysis uses the untold story of Franz Lehman and his perspective as an American soldier of German ancestry to demonstrate that American occupiers and German civilians formed

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5 Throughout his letters, Lehman presented both German civilians and the American Military Government in constantly differing terms that emphasized his contrasting viewpoints of the American occupation and his role in it.
relationships of exchange that enabled each party to obtain what they needed.\textsuperscript{6} I argue that these interactions developed due to racial and cultural similarities that allowed American occupiers to view occupied German civilians in a more sympathetic light. Contact between American soldiers and German civilians cannot be dismissed as either solely positive or negative experiences and requires nuanced analysis that acknowledges the prominent role that culture and race played in the transformation of Germans from the Nazi enemy to Western European allies.

This study is divided into an introduction, two body chapters, and a conclusion. Chapter 1 explores how American occupation soldiers working under the Military Government formed connections with German civilians and framed victory as a performance despite bureaucratic challenges, propaganda, and a language gap. Chapter 2 studies how requisitioning and the non-fraternization ban complicated American and German relationships already laden with uneven power dynamics. I also investigate Franz Lehman’s inconsistent views of the Military Government and German civilians.

This project demonstrates that American relationships with German civilians cannot easily be categorized as either positive or negative, consensual or not consensual. Through the letters of Franz Lehman, I argue that symbiotic interactions, fueled by American soldiers’ mixed attitudes about German civilians, developed over time, enabling both occupiers and the occupied to obtain what they required.\textsuperscript{7} Despite years of exposure to American-produced anti-German propaganda, occupation soldiers recognized the humanity of German civilians through their understanding of their racial and cultural similarities.

\textsuperscript{6} The Franz Lehman letter collection was donated to Brandeis University in 2016 and has never before been examined in a substantial piece of historical analysis.

\textsuperscript{7} My use of the phrase “symbiotic relationship” here is intended to highlight that a process of exchange developed between American soldiers and German civilians. It does not imply that interactions, if they were of a sexual nature, were consensual for both parties.
Sandwiched between arguably two of the most consequential historical conflicts of the twentieth century, World War II and the Cold War, the postwar political and social environments of Europe remain a popular field of historical scholarship. Weighty volumes such as Tony Judt’s highly regarded *Postwar* and Frederick Taylor’s *Exorcising Hitler* provide sweeping historical insights into the increasingly prominent role that the victorious United States played in postwar Europe, particularly in Western Germany. Many treatments of America and Western Germany’s relationship in the postwar context address the devastation of Germany following its defeat, the Berlin Blockade, and the economic miracle of what became West Germany.

Introductory textbooks of modern German history, like the ones authored by Stefan Berger and Hagen Schulze, frame standard questions about the American occupation such as the result of defeat on German civilians and gender relations, in the larger context of Western German nation-building. Works of the era therefore interact with one another through an almost standardized discourse of postwar cultural influence through the presentation of American political and cultural hegemony, denazification efforts, and gender relations.

This thesis draws upon historiographical works from gender, policy, and military perspectives to form a three-pronged research approach. My method enables a more nuanced study of the interactions between American soldiers and German civilians because it combines a microhistory and social history approach with sources that provide a more intimate understanding of the interplay between occupation, cultural similarities, and gender. Through this framework, I highlight how the relationships between the American occupier and German

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occupied were not easily classified as positive or negative, but were constantly evolving entities that served a need for both parties in processes deeply influenced by notions of cultural affinity, gender, and power.

**Historiographical Approaches: Microhistory, Social History, and Military Perspectives**

Before delving into the historiographical works that proved useful during my research for this thesis, it is important to note an additional work whose subject scope is not aligned with this project, but whose method of microhistory writing serves as an example of the illumination of an individual’s story in conjunction with major historical trends. Jon Sensbach’s *Rebecca’s Revival* uses German, Danish, and Dutch archival records to recount the undiscovered story of Rebecca Prottten, a Caribbean slave who transformed herself into a traveling evangelist and founded the first African Protestant congregation in the Americas. Sensbach begins his monograph with a personal vignette set against the contrast of the larger historical events of the interconnected African and Caribbean slave trade. Through this introduction, he presents an exceptional figure with an intriguing and, more importantly, valuable story to tell. Through his work, he mixes small details such as descriptions of the rugged roads that Prottten travelled and her personal struggles in her own evangelical groups alongside the bigger historical events occurring around her. Sensbach creates an intimate picture of Rebecca set against the global slave trade, production of raw materials for capitalist markets, and emergence of religions in new areas in an effective demonstration of the microhistory method of retelling history. His methods of framing the history of the larger transatlantic slave trade through his telling of Rebecca’s story

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provided me with a model of how I could best present Franz Lehman’s individual experience while setting it against the backdrop of occupation.

John Gimbel’s *A German Community Under American Occupation: Marburg, 1945-1952* effectively combines a presentation of the daily military and administrative realities experienced by the Military Government along with supporting details about fraternization and the realities of requisition homes and materials from German civilian. He engages exclusively with the German town of Marburg, located in the center of the nation, and the ways it was affected by the American Military Government from administrative, linguistic, social, requisitioning, and policy perspectives. His microhistory of Marburg serves a prime source of inspiration for this project, which seeks to illustrate how social and military history can be combined to create engaging historical analysis.13

Three texts informed my perspectives about the ways that power structures and policies in the American Military Government created in postwar Western Germany influenced German-American cultural exchange. Petra Goedde’s *GIs and Germans: Gender, Culture, and Foreign Relations: 1945-1949* argues that relationships between American soldiers and German civilians, particularly sexual ones, played a key role in the “transformation” of German-American political relationships from ones of enmity to collaboration.14 Karen Hagemann and Sonya Michel’s introduction to their edited volume *Gender and the Long Postwar: The United States and the Two Germanys, 1945-1989* asserts that the postwar period in Western Germany became “gendered” as women suffered “disproportionately” more than men due to gender roles that

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14 Goedde, *GIs and Germans*, xiv.
persisted even in the aftermath of war.\textsuperscript{15} Additionally, Mire Koikari establishes in her article “Rethinking Gender and Power in the US Occupation of Japan, 1945-1952” that racialized undertones dictated the contrasting ways that American occupation soldiers treated civilians in Japan and Western Germany.\textsuperscript{16}

Petra Goedde highlights in \textit{GIs and Germans} how political, social, and military histories, while each individually valuable, form a more complete and informed record when used in conversation with one another. She successfully “links the history of the cultural and social interactions between American soldiers and German civilians [with] the political history of the occupation.” Goedde uses both “the growing field of local and regional studies on early postwar Germany” with established political and military histories.\textsuperscript{17} The result is a historiographical analysis that weighs the three perspectives of cultural, military, and political histories evenly to demonstrate that positive and negative social interactions between American soldiers and German civilians played a key role in the development of the United States and West Germany as postwar allies.

Goedde also observes, as historians of the twentieth century have, that German and Japanese civilians had different experiences under American occupation based on the victor’s preference for and familiarity with European cultural and racial norms.\textsuperscript{18} She highlights that postwar “cultural affinity” existed between American soldiers and German civilians in a way that did not for Japanese civilians. This resulted in a process of mutual cultural exchange between American soldiers and German civilians that differed widely from the highly negative, traumatic

\textsuperscript{17} Goedde, xvii.
\textsuperscript{18} See Michael Schaller’s \textit{The American Occupation of Japan} and John Dower’s \textit{Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II}. 
occupation that Japanese civilians experienced. Examinations of the similarities and differences present in the American occupation of the two defeated nations, one in the West and one in the East, provide valuable insights into the ways that race and power influence cultural relations.

Goedde explores how American wartime images of the German enemy, the disintegration of the non-fraternization ban, and the defeat of Nazi Germany “explains the ways in which both Germans and Americans legitimized, accepted, and overcame power balances” that developed.” Her project, informed by varied cultural, military, and political sources, influenced my own approach to this project. I integrate Franz Lehman’s conflicted perspectives on German civilians with postwar political and military histories to showcase that their interactions were not easily classified, fulfilled a unique need, and were highly influenced by notions of power and race.

Kathleen J. Nawyn, along with Goedde, establishes that World War II and the fallout of defeat affected German men as well as women. Nawyn’s case study of American occupation officials’ efforts to redirect youth culture in Wurttemberg-Baden away from militaristic ideals emphasizes that interactions between occupier and occupied were not limited to one section of the German population. She highlights that German men felt the results of defeat just as much as German women through their loss of cultural and military authority and occupation policies introduced by the American Military Government such as denazification and the non-fraternization order.

19 Goedde, xix.
20 Ibid, xxi.
Koikari supports Goedde’s claim that power dynamics, in conjunction with gender and race, are “complex” and “intersectional” in relationships of occupation.\textsuperscript{22} Her examination of interactions between Japanese women and American soldiers serves as an effective foil to those that occurred in Western Germany. She explores how the German and Japanese occupations were similar because they involved modes of “reorientation.”\textsuperscript{23}

The correlations end there. Koikari shows that American occupation policy adopted an “imperialist” stance toward the Japanese, from their colonialist language that emphasized how the fallen nation needed “recivilizing” to their belief that the culture was anachronistic and required subordination.\textsuperscript{24} She highlights that “enormous power inequities existed between the United States and a defeated Japan.”\textsuperscript{25} Kolkari’s analysis shows that American occupation policies profoundly shaped the types of positive and negative relationships that developed in Western Germany and Japan. These interactions were shaped by Western ideals of gender and race that enabled American soldiers to empathize with German civilians but regard Japanese citizens through a lens of otherness that required American cultural influence to be successful.

A significant amount of source material exists that explains the intricacies of the military operation in Western Germany was produced by the occupying American Army.\textsuperscript{26} Moreover, because American Occupation forces spoke and produced documents in English, the vast majority of works created were in that language. Earl Ziemke authored the most official account of the Military Government in the immediate postwar period as the historian for the United States Army’s Office of the Chief of Military History. His work contains military narratives and

\textsuperscript{22} Koikari, “Rethinking Gender and Power in the US Occupation of Japan,” 330.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid, 313, 318, 321.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid, 317, 318, 319.
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid, 314.
\textsuperscript{26} See Paul D. Miller’s “A Bibliographic Essay on the Allied Occupation and Reconstruction of West Germany, 1945-1955,” Small Wars and Insurgencies 24, no. 4 (2013): 751-759. He provides an excellent overview of English-language works that explore the American occupation of Western Germany.
statistics that provide a clear picture of the challenges faced by the Military Government in the United States Zone.\textsuperscript{27}

Ziemke’s historical analysis effectively combines primary source material from American occupation soldiers with examinations of the non-fraternization directive and a positive stance on the overall success of the Military Government. In a manner that I strive to achieve in this study, he presents compelling anecdotes about the thoughts and feelings of American soldiers immediately after the war. Ziemke provides eyewitness accounts from one of the first Americans to venture into defeated Nazi Germany, highlights the boredom occupation soldiers experienced, and chronicles the breakdown of the non-fraternization ban.\textsuperscript{28} He asserts that American occupation forces accomplished what they had initially set out to do; “they brought both democracy and relief supplies to Germany in a fair and dignified way and reestablished the necessary infrastructure so that the country could begin functioning normally again.”\textsuperscript{29}

John Gimbel’s \textit{The American Occupation of Germany: Politics and the Military, 1945-1949} provides in-depth analyses of postwar governmental and bureaucratic developments in the Military Government.\textsuperscript{30} In a contrast to his previously-mentioned microhistorical work, this study focuses exclusively on the political and martial challenges experienced by American occupiers in Western Germany. Gimbel examines postwar political wrangling between victors, the struggle to construct and enact a uniform policy, and the constant need for German-speaking occupation specialists.

\textsuperscript{27} Earl Ziemke, \textit{The US Army in the Occupation of Germany} (Washington, D.C: Center of Military History, 1975).
\textsuperscript{28} Ziemke, \textit{The US Army in the Occupation of Germany}, 321.
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., 448-449.
Many histories of postwar Germany focus on the Holocaust, Germany’s reconciliation as a nation with its role in it, and the treatment and relocation of displaced persons. The only discussions of the Holocaust and Jewish identity that I include in this study focus on the ways Jewish-American GIs reconciled their American identities with their Jewish roots while stationed in Germany and the choices that they made when interacting with German civilians who very well could have participated in the Holocaust. Deborah Dash Moore, inspired by the stories that she heard about her father’s experiences as a Jewish-American GI during World War II, wrote *GI Jews*. She explores the choices Jewish soldiers made to counteract anti-Semitism in the American Armed Forces, how they developed coping strategies to deal with witnessing the aftermath of the Holocaust, and the individual choices they made when interacting with German civilians.\(^{31}\)

Primary sources on the occupation are abundant. Written memoirs and unpublished archival materials chronicle everyday experiences of American soldiers in postwar Germany.\(^{32}\) Harold Zink, a political scientist who worked as a consultant for the Military Government in Western Germany, highlights the recruitment efforts made to have German-speaking GIs like Franz Lehman stationed there, the critical need for coordination, and the evolution of Military Government policy in his 1947 book.\(^{33}\) Julius Bach’s observations of postwar Germany and the beginnings of the Military Government as a correspondent for *America Talks*, the official magazine of the United States Army, provides unparalleled insights about American GI and German civilian relations, attempts by the Military Government to coordinate rebuilding and

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denazification efforts, and the feelings of boredom amongst GIs who wanted to return home.

Although Bach worked for an Army publication, his formal writings remain mixed with his personal observations, simultaneously showcasing what the Army wanted to be placed in the American press with his more authentic characterizations of what was occurring on the ground.\(^{34}\) Franz Lehman’s writings address his own attempts to reconcile his individual role in the Military Government and mixed interactions with German civilians through letters created for loved ones. These primary sources provide depth and a more nuanced understanding of how social interactions between American soldiers and German civilians were dictated by notions of race and power.

The historiography that examines postwar Western Germany under the Military Government occupation addresses denazification, gender, and non-fraternization. Experts on this time period including Petra Goedde, John Gimbel, and Kathleen J. Nawyn argue that relationships between American soldiers and German civilians were strongly shaped by established modes of gender that reinforced occupiers as masculine victors and the occupied as supposedly weaker individuals who did whatever was necessary to survive. Lehman’s letters, while providing valuable insights into his contradictory viewpoints of the Military Government and German civilians, remain relatively silent in discussions of sexual relationships between American soldiers and German women. Historians and memoirs of other American soldiers argue the centrality of gender relations and the non-fraternization ban on the overall early experience of the postwar Military Government in Western Germany. I ameliorate this major silence through my focus on larger cultural connections formed between American soldiers and German civilians instead of examining the American occupation solely through a gendered lens.

Despite this discrepancy, the Lehman letters remain worthy of study because they challenge the traditional assumption that interactions between American occupiers and German civilians were easily classified as positive or negative, black and white. Americans and Germans formed complex relationships during the early years of the Military Government that were not simply good or bad.

Even a cursory discussion of the primary source material written about the American occupation and Military Government demonstrates the vast amounts of untold stories like Franz Lehman’s that need only to be uncovered and analyzed by historians. This project counteracts the often daunting political, economic, and military monographs that dominate this era of modern German history and makes studying the period more personal and immediate for both scholars and students. An examination of Franz Lehman’s letters and the unique postwar environment in which he and his peers operated offers a glimpse into the biases, internal conflicts, and personal relations between GIs and German civilians that operated under notions of power and military conquest.
Chapter 1

Although flush from a hard-fought victory over Nazi Germany, the American Military Government and soldiers in it like Franz Lehman faced innumerable challenges in the long-term quest to eventually transform Western Germany into a capitalist democracy. Infrastructure reconstruction, the humane treatment of millions of displaced persons, the management of Nazi records, and the implementation of the denazification policy were only some of the difficulties American occupiers experienced. Despite these hurdles, American GIs were highly confident and viewed the occupation as a performance that could be maintained through power-laden interactions between themselves and German civilians. Soldiers also regarded relationships as an escape from the boredom they felt as static occupation personnel. Although presented with non-fraternization propaganda and the complexity of a language gap, American occupiers forged connections with German civilians based upon power dynamics and cultural affinity.

Challenges for American Military Government

Confusion about policy implementation amongst Military Government leaders forced soldiers and their units to anticipate the unclear priorities of the occupation and work independently. The United States had experience fighting foreign wars, but had never before implemented a Military Government in a western country; previous ventures in the Caribbean, Latin America, and the Philippines served as a benchmark from which occupation policy was formed. As such, there were few precedents that personnel or upper commanders could follow.¹

¹ Ziemke, 448.
American consultants and academics that worked on behalf of the Military Government offered their perspectives about the actions that the United States needed to complete to ensure its long-term success in Germany. Above all, political scientists argued that successful coordination of the occupation would provide a sense of order in an otherwise chaotic Western Germany. They also constructed a laundry list of elements that they felt should be present in the Military Government, including adequate numbers of well-trained personnel, high soldier morale, and proper supplies and the means to transport them.²

Following the division of Germany into Allied zones, the United States Army issued JCS-1067, its initial policy document that dictated how the postwar German economy and civil society should be managed. General Lucius Clay, the highest-ranking member of the Military Government in Germany, found the directive vague and unhelpful in practice.³ He was not alone in his confusion over how to best to interpret military orders from the American government.

Soldiers such as Franz Lehman noted that “there was no consistency in the Occupation Forces’ politics because they didn’t seem to have any.”⁴ The American Military Government in Western Germany found the immensity of military occupation staggering.⁵ Those stationed in Western Germany as part of the Military Government were each issued a Handbook of Military Government but soldiers found that the orders they received from top commanders differed from the official occupation literature.⁶

In the occupied town of Marburg, situated 60 miles north of Frankfurt, even the Military Governor remarked only a month after the May 1945 defeat of Nazi Germany that ‘jurisdiction

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² Zink, 66.
⁴ Letter 64, Franz Lehman letters and other material, 1943 - 1949, undated, Robert D. Farber University Archives & Special Collections Department, Brandeis University.
⁵ Gimbel, A German Community under American Occupation, 7.
⁶ Ibid, 32.
was a subject about which American officers could only guess.’ Additionally, when Drew Middleton, a Foreign Correspondent for *The New York Times*, questioned a detachment officer about what exactly constituted a military government, he received a curt “I don’t know” and was advised to talk with the “big wheels in Frankfurt.” With questions about the larger purpose of the occupation and Military Government, the Marburg detachment made up their own policies at the local level through improvisation. “Soldiers repaired waterworks and sewage systems for the benefits of the soldiers quartered in Marburg, had bodies buried, and organized civilian work crews to clear the streets of rubble.” American soldiers in the early days of the Military Government made up their own tasks in the absence of cohesive leadership or protocol.

Frank Horvay experienced the confusion of the Military Government in southwestern Ansbach, Germany, as a soldier in Section G-5, 13th Armored Division, United States Army. His superior provided such a poor picture of his unit’s assignments that he questioned whether his commander had even read the instructions that accompanied his appointment. With unclear directions from Army authorities and “the threat of epidemics, food shortages, and little electricity, Horvay and his peers decided that security was a top priority.” Independent units like Horvay’s observed what needed to be accomplished and then divided tasks based on necessity and the skills held by soldiers. For example, Horvay worked with local German administrators to understand how Ansbach was organized. Much of the initial challenges for American forces consisted of trying to fill in the blanks left by departures, deaths, and destruction.”

The Military Government faced a constant turnover of personnel. Those charged with training specialists in the field in Western Germany worked with a merry-go-round of soldiers.

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7 Ibid, 33.
New soldiers received the skills and information they needed, worked in the field temporarily, and then were either shipped home to the United States or to Japan. American soldiers stationed in Western Germany during the early days of the Military Government experienced unclear policies and personnel adjustments that required them to recognize and fix issues that arose with little guidance.

Most histories of postwar Western Germany address the immense destruction of the defeated nation. Germany lacked functioning buildings, government facilities, or roads. Franz Lehman recorded his initial impressions of Western Germany’s infrastructure issues and documented the decline of the corn harvest due to lack of threshing, the absence of the postal service, and only intermittent train service for Army officials. In two letters, he described formerly major cities such as Frankfurt and Munich as “just” locations that “had been.” Lehman also noted that the city of Wurzburg “was pretty well banged up from one raid…that had destroyed centuries of civic achievements” such as cathedrals and government buildings. His letters highlight his sadness over the destruction of regional treasures that made his ancestral homeland unique and how he regarded the breakdown of German society with curiosity and awe. Lehman’s letters that recount the German countryside were visceral and descriptive; in one, he recalled how, “from the rubble, rose a putrid smell of garbage and dead bodies.” He even intimated that despite the bravado American soldiers outwardly displayed, “the sheer thought of [rebuilding was] hopeless and left occupiers at a loss for what to start with.”

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10 Ziemke, 313, 321.
12 Letters 59, 66, Franz Lehman letters and other material.
13 Letter 66, Franz Lehman letters and other material.
14 Letter 74, Franz Lehman letters and other material.
15 Letter 62, Franz Lehman letters and other material.
the Military Government spent the first months after victory grappling with logistical questions for the rebuilding of infrastructure, a key goal that would vastly improve the lives of impoverished German civilians.

Displaced persons also posed an immediate issue for Military Government leaders, whose decisions on the millions of homeless civilians affected international policy, citizenship, and European identity. The term displaced person functioned as a catch-all term to describe forced laborers under German rule, prisoners of war, former concentration camp inmates, and Eastern Europeans who voluntarily worked for the Nazis or fled from the advancing Soviet Army in 1944. Following the Allied victory in Europe, military leaders found 6.5 to 7 million displaced persons in each of the three Western zones of occupation that required medical attention, food, clothing, housing, and financial assistance. Additionally, most displaced persons were not German citizens and had been driven there under duress, obliging occupying Allied powers to immediately question difficult issues of borders and repatriation. Franz Lehman recalled his interactions with displaced persons from Poland, the Soviet Union, Italy, and France who worked in the newly formed Records Office of the Military Government while they lived in a local camp and “waited for some sort of solution for their situation.” He believed that the poor administration of the Displaced Persons camps by the Military Government was “one of its worst screw ups.” Individuals like the ones that he worked with in the Records Office “lived from day to day without being assured of proper food since the Army only fed them in extreme emergencies.” Through his observations, Lehman both criticized the Military Government’s treatment of the displaced persons and illustrated how he interacted with not only German

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17 Letter 51, Franz Lehman letters and other material.
18 Ibid.
civilians but an internationally diverse group of people in the midst of the immediate postwar period.

The necessary postwar processing and reviewing of meticulously maintained Nazi documents was an additional obstacle for Military Government leaders. Occupation soldiers such as Franz Lehman and Frank Horvay witnessed the challenge of organizing and separating useless documents from ones that could be used for intelligence purposes. Lehman, assigned to work for the History and Political Intelligence and Arts and Monuments Department, remarked that archivists would consider postwar Germany an “El Dorado” due to the comprehensive collections of Nazi documents and files left behind. He collaborated with displaced persons who worked with the Military Government to earn extra income by moving documents, placing them in temporary storage facilities, and sorting through them in an attempt to glean intelligence on surviving Nazi officials. Frank Horvay also assisted with the establishment of a Document Center devoted solely to the housing of files and photographs confiscated from Nazi leaders. Horvay acknowledged that while the number of documents appeared to be infinite, the Nazis’ careful recordkeeping emerged as a tremendous asset for American Military Government officials. The organization and processing of Nazi documents, although time-consuming, provided American military leaders with information that allowed them to further their denazification efforts.

Denazification, itself an inelegant term reflecting the haste with which it was applied, described both the policy and the process that accompanied American attempts in Western Germany to reorient and recivilize German citizens, in the words of historian Konrad Hugo

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19 Letter 73, Franz Lehman letters and other material.
20 Letters 52, 64, 66, 76, Franz Lehman letters and other material.
21 Horvay, 171.
Jarausch, from fascist devotees to democratic participants in a capitalist western European nation.\textsuperscript{22} It included tours of concentration camps for German citizens who claimed to have no knowledge of the events that had occurred there, political retraining, and the Nuremberg Trials held from 1945 to 1946. In September 1945, the Military Government enacted one of its most important laws for denazification, Law Number 9, which mandated that all Nazis in any positions of power be removed from their posts.\textsuperscript{23} Law Number 9 reinforced the American Military Government’s tactic of rehabilitating Germany through the expulsion of Nazi Party members from public life and the memories and memorabilia of the fascist regime that accompanied them.

Among the more controversial portions of denazification was the lengthy questionnaire that the Military Government required all German citizens to complete. The form stands as a marker of German collective memory in the postwar period.\textsuperscript{24} The document contained 131 questions that explored an individual’s past experiences with Nazi Party membership and associated activities. If a German civilian lived in the borders of the Military Government, he or she needed an official certificate of denazification that outlined their level of involvement with the Nazi Party to obtain employment. Germans submitted themselves to the investigations of a denazification board if their pasts were deemed especially questionable.\textsuperscript{25}

Lehman commented on his own experiences in the denazification process, observing that “he hoped he could be instrumental in evicting Nazis who had infiltrated into the local

\textsuperscript{24} Jarausch, \textit{After Hitler}, 48.
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid 47, 48.
administration” after the “lousy job completed by the local Army attachment in town.”

Through one of his several jobs he held while in the Military Government, Lehman travelled throughout the countryside and investigated homes and structures that he believed might be occupied by currently undiscovered Nazis. His work finally uncovered “the addresses of a lot of swagger stick ex-heroes” of the Nazi Party. Lehman eagerly reported that “the property from former strong Nazis could be confiscated and put under Allied control” through requisitioning.

He was clearly proud of how his work contributed to future “fat days of reckoning for the Nazi rat nesters who had been opening shops using supplies meant for German civilians.” His letters show that, although denazification efforts created negative interactions between American soldiers and German civilians, Lehman believed in the effectiveness of the policy and harbored an expected dislike of Nazis.

As Jarausch observes, most modern German historians agree that denazification resulted in a terrific failure for the American Military Government. Many former Nazi officials remained in positions of power, which the United States purposely disregarded as it refocused its efforts on the containment of communism and dominance in the new Cold War. The defeat of denazification stemmed from inconsistent policy production and enforcement, and from the rapid shifting of American priorities from Western Germany as a location of postwar moral reckoning to the first battleground of the Cold War. American officials turned their attention to the rebuilding of German society and a functioning capitalist economy as the Cold War with the Soviet Union emerged as the predominant concern for American foreign policy. When Western

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26 Letter 73, Franz Lehman letters and other material.
27 Letter 74, Franz Lehman letters and other material.
28 Ibid.
29 Ibid.
Germany officially became known as the Federal Republic of Germany in 1949, it effectively served as a democracy but one constructed with Nazi bricks.  

**Victory Confidence and Occupation as a Performance**

Letters from occupation soldiers who had been shipped to Western Germany highlight the high level of confidence that those involved in the mission felt. Although he acknowledged that the Military Government would be criticized for the mistakes that it would inevitably make, Private First-Class Franz Lehman predicted that the assignments soldiers would receive and the inevitable success of the occupation would make others envious. With the bravado expected of a soldier enjoying the perks of victory, Lehman also viewed the occupation as a “great show and a great performance.”

Walter Krause, a German-speaking Military Government soldier, wrote that the United States Army seemed to “lose its edge and severity and became unmilitary in the ways in which it functioned” as the risks of combat faded into the boredom of rebuilding and occupation. An occupation soldier stationed in Western Germany as part of the Military Government, Krause believed that the monotony of occupation dulled the senses of his peers as they turned to drinking and the company of German women for entertainment. The soldier illustrated how he and his peers realized that they failed to perform the show of American military strength to German civilians necessary to maintain the façade of martial superiority. The men in Krause’s unit then increased the number of military ceremonies and drills to make it clear to German

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31 Levy, 631.
32 Letter 42, Franz Lehman letters and other material.
33 Letters 56, 58, Franz Lehman letters and other material.
civilians that the Military Government still remained in power, an action that made Krause swell with pride for his peers and his country.³⁵

Military Government personnel celebrated their roles as victors. Franz Lehman bragged in letters home to family members that he crafted his correspondence on a typewriter and stationary bearing the name and seal of Gauleiter Buerckel, one of the region’s most prominent Nazi leaders, while he sat at his desk in his former palace that had been converted into a Military Government headquarters.³⁶ Lehman reveled in the fact that the American Military Government now occupied such a building previously so strategically important to the operating of local Nazi bureaucracy.

American soldiers also described German civilians in expected, but degrading terms that emphasized both the literal and imagined dichotomies between conqueror and conquered. Julius Bach, a journalist, highlighted how American soldiers realized how German civilians could be put to work. GIs stationed among civilians “discovered that in the Germans they had a beast of burden which they could order about. Moreover, the German liked to be spurred. This made life for Americans in Germany easy.”³⁷ Such comments by GIs highlight how the combination of years of targeted propaganda and the thrill of victory led them to view German civilians as mere objects of occupation that could be used for the entertainment of American soldiers and on whom revenge could be enacted.

However, the poor treatment of German civilians, particularly women, by American occupiers paled in comparison to the racially-motivated persecution of Japanese women during the American occupation there. After the failure of a non-fraternization law not unlike the one

³⁵ Krause, So I Was a Sergeant, 173.
³⁶ Letters 56, 57, Franz Lehman letters and other material.
³⁷ Bach, America’s Germany, 272.
proposed for Western Germany and the “proliferation of venereal disease among servicemen,”
Japanese women who had already compromised themselves through sexual relationships were
arrested.\textsuperscript{38} The occupation of Japanese women’s bodies by American soldiers was “linked to
racial politics” in ways that German women did not experience.\textsuperscript{39}

Boredom and apathy amongst American soldiers in Western Germany emerged as a
pressing issue that contributed to their desire for companionship and interactions with German
women.\textsuperscript{40} For the most part, soldiers wished for nothing more than to return to the comforts of
the United States. The joy of victory in Europe in May 1945 quickly faded away, with soldiers’
realization of the immense amount of time and work needed to stabilize Germany, further
obstacles preventing them from seeing wives and growing children.

Occupation soldiers found their new postwar lives monotonous and centered around the
awkward task of occupying for occupation’s sake. They sat, guarded, and acted as an
intimidating visual reminder to the Germans of their defeat.\textsuperscript{41} The tedious, relatively safe
postwar life for occupation soldiers affected their morale and sense of discipline. With the thrill
of battle now gone, soldiers performed uninspiring, repetitive tasks that maintained the
bureaucracy of the Army of Occupation. Guns needed to be inventoried, ammunition needed
disposal, and trucks needed to be guarded.\textsuperscript{42} Operating in the twilight period between war and
peace, soldiers had little interest in beginning prolonged projects or shipment to new places to
advance American interests. Occupation soldiers experienced an emotional leveling-off as they

\textsuperscript{38} Koikari, 322.
\textsuperscript{39} Koikari, 326.
\textsuperscript{40} Bach, 27.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid, 39, 40.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid, 40-41.
transitioned from shooting to beer-drinking and learned to regard Germans not as anonymous enemies but as civilian faces attempting to survive a postwar landscape.43

Remembered as benevolent liberators who terminated Nazism and enabled democracy to return to Europe, American GIs displayed poor behavior that caused once-hopeful German civilians to doubt the fairness and effectiveness of the American occupation. During the first year of the Military Government in Marburg, Germany, American soldiers flooded the streets of the town as they awaited orders and deployment. Bored by the occupation but eager to prove their status as victors, GIs carried out a number of unprovoked attacks on civilian women. A young German woman fractured her back after she jumped out of a third-story window to prevent an assault from soldiers who followed her into her apartment. Disenchanted American soldiers filled up trucks and drove along city streets with a cane extended, in the hopes that a woman’s ankle might become caught.44 Walter Krause witnessed a desperate German civilian clutching an infant to her chest who approached a train transporting hundreds of American soldiers and begged for food. A soldier procured a sandwich for her to eat, but would only allow her to eat it until after he forced her to hug him and groped her bottom. The incident deeply angered Krause, who viewed it as an act of obvious degradation.45 Interactions such as the one viewed by Krause, which ranged from random rapes to those established on the submission of a desperate civilian woman to an American, highlight the more negative experiences that occurred between American soldiers and German civilians in postwar Western Germany.

Goedde cites writer J. Glenn Gray, “an intelligence officer in Europe during World War II, who suggested that sexual interactions between American men and German women could be

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44 Gimbel, A German Community under American Occupation, 69-70.
45 Krause, 51.
read as an expression of victory over an enemy.”46 Sexual encounters with German woman, consensual or not, thus evolved into a type of victory lap, requisition, and form of revenge for American Military Government soldiers.47

Army propaganda productions highlight how American military leaders viewed interactions between occupation soldiers and German civilians with trepidation and used propaganda in an attempt to discourage such relationships. “Your Job in Germany,” produced in the first year of American occupation by the United States Army, used highly emotional music and recreations of pivotal events in German history to warn soldiers against cultural affinity.48 Onscreen text indicated that officials showed the film after screening raw footage of what American soldiers discovered in liberated concentration camps, capitalizing on the highly emotional nature of those films to make an impression upon their soldier viewers.

The film led the audience through modern Germany’s legacy as an international aggressor and cited the battle-loving tendencies of the Prussian military and the nation’s involvement in World War I as evidence of a dangerous people. It instructed occupation soldiers to remain respectful yet highly suspicious of German civilians. Soldiers needed to regard all Germans as potential murderers and enemies due to their nationalistic, conquest-driven outlook impressed upon them by Nazi ideology. American military leaders considered German youth raised under a lifetime of Nazi propaganda as well as civilian women to be particularly harmful to the accomplishment of policy in Western Germany.49

Soldiers acknowledged their understanding of the ways that the American Military Government attempted to shape their views and actions of the German people and occupation

46 Goedde, 83.
47 Ibid, 84.
48 Ibid, xix.
49 Frank Capra, Your Job in Germany.
through propaganda. Franz Lehman recorded that “he had fallen prey to the Army propaganda and had attempted to rationalize it.” He praised the work of the Military Government and stated that “the longer we stay here the better it may become for a long period of peace and ultimately also for the German people.” In addition to admitting how American propaganda succeeded in molding the perspectives of American soldiers, Lehman also observed that American doctrinaire efforts “had to be consistent and adjusted to new conditions” in Germany. These factors included the “slow expurgation of war criminals, the elimination of Nazis from public offices,” and the declining interest amongst American military leaders in denazification in the face of the emerging Cold War. Lehman highlighted how American propaganda shifted from framing German civilians as military-obsessed conquerors as seen in “Your Job in Germany” to the idea “that the guilt of the German people was not universal.” Soldiers such as Lehman observed how the American Military Government pivoted in the way it presented its propaganda to soldiers and how their own personal views of the occupation were purposely influenced by it.

Members of the Military Government were occupiers in a land that did not speak English. Simple and highly necessary interactions between soldiers and civilians, ranging from the explanation of occupation policy to the requisition of homes and materials for military use, became immensely more difficult when involved parties could not communicate. German-speaking American occupation soldiers were few and far-between, often requiring military officials to rely on German civilians, the very people whom they were charged with occupying and controlling, to act as interpreters and translators. Frank Horvay used his German skills to

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50 Letter 73, Franz Lehman letters and other material.
51 Ibid.
52 Ibid.
53 Ibid.
54 Ibid.
speak to local city officials about the political organization of Ansbach, the town where he was stationed. German-speaking American soldiers stationed in Western Germany such as Franz Lehman, Frank Horvay, and Walter Krause were highly coveted for their language skills and familiarity with German culture.

The newly formed American Military Government in Western Germany required soldiers like Franz Lehman to confront the reconstruction of key buildings, postwar statuses of displaced persons, processing of valuable Nazi records, and applying denazification policy. American soldiers embraced their roles as victorious occupiers and allowed these outlooks to guide their confident interactions with German civilians. Such connections were constructed on ideas of American cultural superiority, gender imbalances, and racial similarities.

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56 Horvay, 167.
57 Krause, 167.
Chapter 2

American soldiers interacted with German civilians through highly personal, traumatic episodes of requisitioning on behalf of the Military Government. Furthermore, despite the efforts of American military leaders to limit relationships between occupier and occupied through propaganda and punishment, soldiers violated the non-fraternization order and forged connections with German women. Franz Lehman and other members of the Military Government struggled with simultaneous fondness and disregard for German culture and its people. An examination of Franz Lehman’s letters and postwar Western Germany through the application of the microhistorical and social history methods reveals that occupation relationships cannot be hastily classified as either consensual or nonconsensual, friendly or hostile. In an already complex geopolitical environment, American soldiers engaged in sexual affairs laden with notions of nationalism, race, imperialism, and gender.

Occupation Power Dynamics

Soldiers such as Franz Lehman ventured into the homes and businesses of German civilians to requisition goods from both former Nazi Party strongholds and German civilians. Officially, Americans received standing orders to appropriate any property that previously belonged to the German Army or the Nazi Party.\(^1\) Unsurprisingly, the line between formally sanctioned requisitioning and unequivocal looting remained a blurry one constantly crossed over by American soldiers eager for war souvenirs. In the hazy legal landscape of a defeated, postwar Germany, American occupation personnel hastily confiscated whatever goods that they argued

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\(^1\) Gimbel, *A German Community under American Occupation*, 61.
the Military Government needed to operate successfully. In the upsetting interactions, American soldiers forced destitute Germans out of their homes and allowed them to take only a few personal possessions. Requisitioning missions were traumatic for soldiers, who recognized the humanity of the civilians but were also tethered to their orders from the Military Government.

In Marburg, Western Germany, the Military Government attachment requisitioned houses, schools, clinics, and hospitals for official use. American personnel applied little consistency to the requisitioning of public buildings or private family homes, ousting both known Nazis and civilian families. Predictably, the German citizens of Marburg criticized the requisitions of their homes and public buildings more than any other aspect of the American occupation, except for denazification.²

Although hardened to battle and conditioned from years of anti-German propaganda, American soldiers dreaded the process of forcibly removing a family, usually destitute and in need of food and shelter, from their home for the sake of requisitioning. Harold Freeman, a Jewish-American soldier placed in the 83⁷ Infantry Division who spoke some German, felt internally conflicted as he witnessed the aftermath of a regime founded upon the goal of the extermination of his own people. He lived in confiscated housing as an occupation soldier and pondered the interplay between Nazi hate and greed with the prosperity that it supposedly brought to Germany. In spite of his Jewish identity, Freeman felt pangs of guilt and empathy for German civilians that he evicted from their homes. He did not hesitate when he discussed shooting an anonymous enemy soldier during the heat of battle, but felt guilty about chasing an injured woman out of her house into the street at night, even if it was for the sake of housing American soldiers.³ Although subjected to years of anti-German propaganda, soldiers like

² Gimbel, A German Community under American Occupation, 54, 55, 57.
Freeman distinguished between Nazi soldiers and ordinary German civilians who were mistreated during processes of requisitioning. Some GIs such as Freeman followed their orders to requisition what was necessary for the success of the Military Government, but sympathized for German civilians’ desperate postwar situations.

Freeman’s experiences highlight how requisitioning operated as an arguably necessary yet highly traumatic postwar operation for both Military Government soldiers and the German civilians they evicted. Despite yielding power over German civilians and possible Nazi sympathizers and years of viewing Germany as the natural enemy of the American people, soldiers that worked directly with civilians empathized with their desperation. Walter Krause, another German-speaking member of the American Military Government in Western Germany, remained disturbed by the harsh actions of his fellow soldiers during processes of requisition. He noticed that requisitioning in his unit “was [diven] was not so much [by] the needs of the soldiers [but as a] method of revenge.” Like Freeman, Krause noted how important it was to treat German civilians “as people who were human and had lives and feelings.”

Despite exposure to years of anti-German propaganda, many American Military Government soldiers felt guilt and sympathy for German civilians after highly personal, often traumatic postwar operations such as requisitioning.

**Non-fraternization**

American policy-makers developed the non-fraternization ban in early 1944. The policy, which forbade “marriages, integrated seating at religious services, visitation at private homes, or even participation in a handshake,” stemmed from American military leaders’ worries that any

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4 Krause, 75, 174.
level of interaction between American soldiers and German civilians would lead to “cultural affinity” and result in a breakdown of the authority of the Military Government. Military officials worried that American soldiers would, through “friendly interactions,” recognize similarities between themselves as white, European descendants and the German civilians they guarded. Originally crafted to prevent encounters between all members of German society, including the elderly, children, men, and women, the non-fraternization policy came to be viewed as one that exclusively targeted sexual relationships between American men and German women.

Military officials viewed “the fraternization ban as both a security measure and a form of punishment for the German people” that prevented individuals eager to socialize and thank their American liberators from doing so. The ruling demonstrated to the German people that the American Military Government now operated as the force in Western Germany that needed to be respected and obeyed. The United States War Department “prepared a simplified version of the rationale behind the non-fraternization ban and the specific rules of it that American soldiers needed to follow in its Pocket Guide to Germany.” Along with explanations of the non-fraternization rule, the booklet “reflected the American government’s official view of Germany as a monolithic, militaristic society” that required occupation soldiers to practice caution and remain focused during interactions with civilians. The booklet “remained ambiguous as to what kind of behavior specifically constituted fraternization.” American soldiers ready to embrace their role as German liberators questioned whether giving a German child a candy bar or a

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5 Taylor, Exorcising Hitler, 126, and Goedde, 43, 67-68.
6 Taylor, 123-126.
7 Goedde, 45.
8 Ibid, 46.
9 Ibid, 49.
starving German woman food for her family would result in discipline from higher-ranking officials.

In the 91 letters produced by Franz Lehman during his time as an American occupation soldier, only four explicitly mentioned sexual interactions or the non-fraternization policy. After he discussed the requisitioning of a major Nazi official’s former office building and remarked that most German civilians “spoke to American soldiers with a petulant tone mixed in with a well-prepared remark about how they always listened to Radio Luxemb[o]urg\(^{10}\) in spite of the Nazis’ ban on it,” Lehman observed how French prostitutes originally occupied the home.\(^{11}\) Although Lehman did not specifically address whether he or other American soldiers stationed with the requisitioned building interacted with the French prostitutes, his mere noting of their presence demonstrates how the confusion in the months that followed the war provided American soldiers with myriad opportunities for sexual encounters.

The movement of millions of refugees, goods, and soldiers in late 1945 to early 1946 meant that American soldiers posted in the United States Zone of Germany engaged in sexual relationships with not only German women but also with displaced women from around Europe. Lehman’s characterization of the Military Government as “a big game and a great comedy dealing in all registers and all walks of life” functions both as a biting critique of the American occupation as well as a demonstration of the dynamic nature of the United States Zone.\(^{12}\)

American soldiers engaged in sexual relationships with both German women and other Europeans such as the French prostitutes who found themselves in postwar Germany as a result

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\(^{10}\) Franz Lehman misspelled Luxembourg in his original letter. Radio Luxembourg was a multi-language broadcasting program that originated in Luxembourg. The English-version of the program began broadcasting in 1933 to radio stations in Ireland and the United Kingdom.

\(^{11}\) Letter 57, Franz Lehman letters and other material.

\(^{12}\) Ibid.
of Nazi forced labor movements, a desire to profit off the sexual needs of Allied soldiers, or their fleeing of the Soviet Army.\textsuperscript{13}

Although he served in the first wave of American occupation soldiers in the United States Zone and undoubtedly witnessed the results of the non-fraternization ban and its eventual collapse in the Military Government, his letters remain remarkably silent on the subject of sexual relationships between American soldiers and German civilian women. Lehman indirectly discussed the non-fraternization ban through his commentary and sympathy that he extended particularly towards often German women forced into roles as the main provider for their families. He followed the patterns established by his military peers in their own communications home and later memoirs through his gendered and age-specific distinctions of young German women who surrendered whatever they needed to in order to survive, including the socially important marker of feminine innocence.\textsuperscript{14} He noted with sadness that “young women were selling themselves [to American soldiers] for a 20-kilometer ride or a piece of chocolate… [and that the reward for doing so] was meagerly rationed food.”\textsuperscript{15} Lehman’s noting of the youth of the German women, use of the phrase “selling themselves” to highlight the indignity of their situation, and the mention of the “meagerly rationed food” that they received in return demonstrated his undeniable knowledge of fraternization. Moreover, his apparent sadness at the loss of German civilian women’s perceived loss of sexual autonomy shows that he empathized with the desperate women and regarded them as victims that required rescue instead of anger and retribution.

\textsuperscript{13} The Soviet Army, known for its gendered brutality towards German women in the waning days of the war, was also referred to as the Red Army.

\textsuperscript{14} Bach, 77.

\textsuperscript{15} Letter 76, Franz Lehman letters and other material.
He remarked on the non-fraternization policy in only one other letter. Responding to a question about his viewpoint of the effectiveness of the ban and the eventual lifting of it, Lehman vaguely commented that “he could only say that now the same things were being done openly that went on before anyway, and maybe on a little larger scale.” In this instance, through his choice of the words “only say,” it appears that Lehman reluctantly discussed the policy and the sexual interactions that accompanied it, almost as if he wanted to protect his actions and those of his fellow soldiers. His language in response to the question seems coded and unclear. Throughout his letters, Lehman only minimally discussed sexual interactions that took place in the American occupation zone in the months after May 1945. His noting of the presence of French prostitutes and sympathy for the lengths that young German women would go to for food demonstrates his awareness of the occurrence of sexual events. Through his work, he interacted with dozens of German civilians and Allied soldiers and undoubtedly witnessed and heard about sexual affairs.

The tantalizingly small amounts of information that Lehman provides on the subject, along with his known ability to travel through the American zone that would result in exposure to sexual interactions, results in a glaring silence in the Lehman letters collection that raises more questions than answers. Throughout his letters, Lehman does not mention a wife or even a woman with whom he was communicating, eliminating the possibility that his commitment to a significant other back in the United States prevented him from engagement in sexual affairs. The most likely explanation for his relative silence on the sexual interactions between American soldiers and German women revolves around the fact that he composed the letters to update family members and close friends in the United States. Given his audience, it would be unlikely

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16 Ibid.
that Lehman would want to outline his sexual escapades to members of his family. Lehman’s silence on non-fraternization, one of the most discussed aspects of the early American occupation of Western Germany, highlights the contradictory nature of both his letters and his overall experience in Germany.

In contrast to Lehman’s relative silence on the realities of the non-fraternization ban, testimonies from other American occupation soldiers provide perspectives on both the failure of the ban and the general nature of sexual relationships in the immediate postwar environment. Julius Bach captured how boredom, loneliness, and a desire for companionship fueled American soldiers to blatantly disregard the non-fraternization order, which came to be regarded as “an immense and sordid joke.”\(^\text{17}\) The supposedly strict ban on any type of relationships transformed “furlines,”\(^\text{18}\) in the eyes of American soldiers, from sexual objects of conquest in war to “forbidden fruit,” whose off-limits statuses “made them all the tastier in the minds of many men.”\(^\text{19}\) For American soldiers, sexual relationships with German women operated as a positive experience because they simultaneously satisfied their sexual needs as well as reinforced established roles of victorious military occupiers. Sexual affairs with American men enabled German women to provide desperately-needed food and money for their families, but often at the cost of their happiness and dignity.

Walter Krause, a German-speaking American soldier, recalled a blunt conversation he had with one of his non-commissioned officers, who warned that soldiers caught “piddling around” with German women would face removal of their senior rankings, disciplinary action,

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\(^{17}\) Bach, 72, 75.  
\(^{18}\) American occupation soldiers referred to young German women as frauleins, but frequently misspelled the German word, as Bach did here. Traditionally, the word fraulein in German serves as a form of address for a young, unmarried woman, but widespread use of the word expanded its meaning to younger German civilian women, especially those who engaged in sexual affairs with American or other Allied soldiers.  
\(^{19}\) Ibid, 73.
and punishment.\textsuperscript{20} Despite the risks and the immense propaganda that warned American soldiers of the supposedly sensuous German Fraulein, seen in the film \textit{Your Job in Germany} and the \textit{Pocket Guide to Germany}, American GIs entered into sexual relationships fraught with uneven power relations, upholding of traditional gender norms reinforced by war, and cultural affinity.

Occupation soldiers privy to the intricacies of the non-fraternization ban noted that, despite restrictions and threats of punishment, GIs as well as their superior officers and commanders participated in sexual encounters with German women in “clandestine moments.”\textsuperscript{21} Upper-level officers who discovered soldiers in violation of the restriction typically turned a blind eye to the behavior, largely because they themselves were also engaged in sexual affairs with German civilian women.\textsuperscript{22} An embarrassing breakdown of discipline occurred in the numerous and blatant transgressions committed by occupation soldiers in the direct view of the German civilians that they guarded.

Although sexual interactions were largely consensual, an uneven power dynamic continued to exist between American soldiers and German women. At late night meet-ups or official Army dances where officials continued to disregard rule violations, American men rewarded their sexual partners with purchases of “snacks and dinners. Many GIs supported Frauleins, who in turn provided for their desperate families, with the relinquishing of their own food rations.”\textsuperscript{23} Although soldiers such as Walter Krause referred to GIs as the “boyfriends” of the Frauleins, it should not be forgotten that encounters between the two parties stemmed from

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\textsuperscript{20} Krause, 56.  \\
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid, 151.  \\
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid.  \\
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid.
\end{flushright}
German women’s attempts at survival and American soldiers’ desires for sexual companionship.  

As Goedde notes, fraternization created opportunities for GIs and German civilians to form social, political, cultural, and sexual connections, exactly what American military policymakers originally attempted to abate through their development of the non-fraternization ban.  

German women and men learned about American food, food, and “slang” as American GIs developed a contradictory fondness for Germany. These sexual interactions did not, of course, occur without consequences. Illegitimate children and marriages formed out of the forbidden sexual unions between American occupation soldiers and German civilian women, as Petra Goedde explores in detail.  

Additionally, venereal disease emerged as a constant source of worry for American military leaders privy to the utter failure of their non-fraternization rule. German women were not unscathed by the acquisition of venereal diseases, which spread equally both to and from civilians and American GIs. Sexually transmitted diseases soon came to be expected as much as the receiving of chocolate bars and cigarettes when American soldiers liberated German “hamlets and villages.”  

Fraternization resulted in cultural and gendered connections that were both positive and negative for American soldiers and German civilians.  

For the American Military Government attempting to restore order in Germany and establish itself as a dominant power in the postwar environment, the blatant violations and failure of the non-fraternization could not continue. Soldiers and officers made no attempts to hide their sexual relationships, with disregard for the ban becoming so widespread that “the sight of German-American couples had become an integral part of the postwar Western German

24 Bach, 77.
25 Goedde, 126.
26 Bach, 77, and Goedde 94.
27 Bach, 77.
Ultimately, fraternization was not the problem. Violations of the non-fraternization ban reflected the embarrassing reality that “German civilians witnessed the spectacle of the United States Army unwilling and unable to enforce its own rules.” The Military Government could not expect obedience and respect from a defeated nation if they themselves could not ensure compliance from their own forces.

Doubts about the necessity of the non-fraternization ban emerged almost immediately. “Only one week after the Allied victory and conclusion of war in Europe, insightful military officials had already advised General Dwight D. Eisenhower that the ban required reconsideration, citing that it unnecessarily tarnished the records of highly needed, otherwise well-behaved soldiers.” For soldiers and commanders alike, the non-fraternization ban, transformed from a policy intended to curtail social and personal connections between occupiers and the occupied into “an immense and sordid joke, like Prohibition in 1930s America.”

As the American Military Government appeared weak and unorganized, General Eisenhower followed the advice of his policy makers who had witnessed the failure of the ban in Western Germany and cancelled it. Historians differ on precisely when the Military Government redacted the policy but agree that its termination occurred quickly enough to indicate that American military leaders acknowledged that the growing connections between soldiers and civilians and the ban upon such relationships had become detrimental to the goals and image of the American occupation. The non-fraternization policy and the American government’s choice to rapidly rescind it served as a minimal tarnish on an otherwise successful postwar program of

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28 Goedde, 88.
29 Bach, 75.
30 Ziemke, 321-322.
31 Bach, 75.
32 Ziemke asserts on that the order was lifted by Eisenhower as early as June 15, 1945, 327, while Goedde argues that it did not actually occur until October 1945, 78.
denazification, reorientation, and reintegration of Western Germany back into the good graces of Europe and the capitalist west.\textsuperscript{33}

**Legacies of Connections Formed**

The original intention of the non-fraternization ban, namely to prevent the formation of both sexual and social relationships with German civilians, failed to contain the interactions and lasting connections that American men formed with both German women and larger German cultural norms. With the war over, many American soldiers, “plateaued in their feelings toward their recent German enemies,” and quickly regarded them as “simply Germans” who wanted food and shelter for their families.\textsuperscript{34}

The ineffectiveness of the non-fraternization ban, encompassed by both the violation of the rule itself by American soldiers highlights the deeply contradictory nature of Franz Lehman’s entire stint as an occupation soldier in the Military Government in Western Germany. From letter to letter, Lehman offered his family members wildly differing perspectives of his interactions with other American soldiers, the Military Government and larger American mission in Germany, and German civilians. Such inconsistencies became further complicated by Lehman’s identity as a Jewish, German-speaking American soldier who possessed a greater understanding of the linguistic and cultural nuances of Germans.

Lehman displayed his confusion about the role of the Military Government as an occupation force in Western Germany and his part in its bureaucracy through his praises of the American mission and then subsequent, often sudden reversals in tone and pride for the undertaking. In one of his first letters, Lehman boasted how the success of the Military

\textsuperscript{33} Jarausch, 47-48.  
\textsuperscript{34} Bach, 263.
Government would be remembered and revered by historians and Americans alike, in spite of some inevitable problems that could occur along the way.\textsuperscript{35} He also argued that “the Military Government as run under the American Army [needed to] be perpetuated, [as] the longer [they] stayed there, the better it [would be] for a period of peace.”\textsuperscript{36} Through such positive remarks about the effectiveness of the Military Government, Lehman presented himself as an patriotic American soldier firmly in line with the ideals of the mission to reestablish and reorient Western Germany. Additionally, Lehman seemed committed to the tenets of American democracy such as due process and a trial by jury when he renounced the “retaliatory” behavior of the French Army towards collaborators in their zone of occupation.\textsuperscript{37} He indicated that he possessed no interest in cultural “purification” or “the exercising of farcical power,” simultaneously criticizing the French’s own methods of denazification and applauding the Military Government’s approaches to the reformation of Western Germany.\textsuperscript{38}

Lehman displayed his conflicting perspectives on the American occupation in a particularly jarring letter in which he both lauded and attacked it. In a motif common in the letters and memoirs of Military Government soldiers,\textsuperscript{39} he compared the American operation in Western Germany to “a great show and a great performance” wherein the well-oiled military bureaucracy would successfully rescue and reinvigorate a broken Germany while on the postwar international stage. However, only a few sentences prior and in the same letter, Lehman derisively characterized himself as “a member of the most ungraceful group of scavengers [that existed] on both sides of the Rhine.”\textsuperscript{40} Lehman’s previous belief in the American occupation of

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{35} Letter 42, Franz Lehman letters and other material.
  \item \textsuperscript{36} Letter 73, Franz Lehman letters and other material.
  \item \textsuperscript{37} Letter 46, Franz Lehman letters and other material.
  \item \textsuperscript{38} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{39} Krause. 173.
  \item \textsuperscript{40} Letter 58, Franz Lehman letters and other material.
\end{itemize}
Western Germany, propelled by seemingly pure ideals of justice, democracy, and a desire to assist the struggling nation, are contradicted by his classification of the Military Government as a social, political, and economic vulture. Through his clashing statements about the true nature of the American Military Government in Western Germany, Lehman demonstrated his own contradictory relationship with his role as an occupation soldier.

Lehman’s letters ultimately reveal his deeply conflicted feelings about his role as a German-American soldier occupying his own people and a member of the Military Government. From letter to letter, and even in the same sentence, he offered interpretations of the American occupation of Western Germany that spanned from characterizations of it as one of the greatest examples of American democracy to its status as a bureaucratic monolith filled with sycophants. Additionally, Lehman struggled to work through his feelings of disorientation as he classified German people both as former Nazis that needed to be rooted out of mainstream society to a nation that should be trusted to administer their own issues following mentorship by the United States.

Lehman recognized the desperation of German civilians as defeated victims of war, perhaps seeing in them his own distant German relatives. In sympathetic, adjective-filled prose, Lehman described to his relatives “how the Germans [were] so completely a defeated nation that their very emotions [had] been extinguished.” In a manner similar to his fellow occupation soldiers emotionally jarred by the requisitioning of homes and materials from German civilians, he remained moved by the utter hopelessness, misery, and poverty present throughout defeated Western Germany. Through Lehman’s eyes, the destruction of the war stripped from German

\[41 \text{ Ibid.}\]
\[42 \text{ Letter 59, Franz Lehman letters and other material.}\]
civilians the basic necessities of humanity: shelter, adequate food, and even emotion.\textsuperscript{43} His empathetic outlook thus again intimated that the United States, through the Military Government, functioned as a postwar international rescue force that provided hope and capitalist wealth to downtrodden countries such as Western Germany.

Lehman constructed himself as an almost poster-child for the success of the American occupation, the Military Government, and the planned, eventual handover of power from the watchful United States to a newly formed and refreshed Western Germany. His letters that outlined the pathetic postwar helplessness of formerly prosperous and proud members of the Nazi Party transitioned into discussion of hopeful expectations of the establishment of a self-sufficient “German administration.”\textsuperscript{44} In additional examples that establish Lehman’s clashing inner feelings of the Military Government and civilians, he praised the Army establishment after repeated criticisms of its very existence and function and argued that it should be perpetuated to ensure “a long period of peace…for the German people.”\textsuperscript{45} His optimism “for the principles of the Military Government” continued into his glowing endorsement of the German people, who he advocated to “be trusted with the responsibilities of building up their own administration.”\textsuperscript{46} Through his exaltations of the democratically and socially reformed German people and the American occupation that transformed them so effectively, Lehman appeared as a resounding supporter of both his country’s fraternal mentorship of Western Germany as an emerging capitalist powerhouse and the phoenix-like qualities of the German people.

\textsuperscript{43} Some Americans soldiers, especially Jewish-American soldiers, argued that the German nation deserved to suffer as modes of revenge and justice for the ways that Nazis and inactive onlookers tortured and killed enemies of the state. See Moore, 106-107.
\textsuperscript{44} Letter 73, Franz Lehman letters and other material.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid.
He then negated his previously glowing views of German civilians through vitriolic comments in his letters that hint at lingering feelings of resentment, distrust, and anger that he harbored during his time as an occupation soldier. After he transferred to an intelligence section of the Military Government, Lehman delighted at the discovery of a list containing the names of prominent Nazis in the surrounding region. He hoped that the information would “put a red-hot flame under the lame buttocks” of Military Government officials that he viewed as lazy and compel them to finally investigate “rat-nesting, casual Nazis who still managed to operate establishments” even under the nose of the occupation.\footnote{Letter 74, Franz Lehman letters and other material.} In one sentence, Lehman managed to negate both his support for the Military Government’s mission and his previously sympathetic view of the German people. He asserted that the world’s most powerful nation and occupying army failed to root out Nazis at a local level, who continued to operate in plain sight.

In studying both the Lehman collection of letters and the complex cultural interactions that existed in the 1945-1946 postwar atmosphere of non-fraternization, their contradictory elements become apparent. Throughout his deployment as an occupation soldier in Western Germany, the land of his near relatives, German- and Jewish-American Franz Lehman presented pendulum-like viewpoints of American policies and German civilians. He purported to both support and loathe the American Military Government as well as empathize for and distrust his German brethren. Like the American occupation itself and the United States as it embraced its new role as an international leader on the world stage, Lehman appeared unsure how he should emotionally process his time during the war and navigate the complex gender and social interactions as both an occupation soldier and a man of German descent. Such uncertainties manifested themselves in his contradictory statements.
Conclusion

The interactions between American soldiers stationed in Western Germany and German civilians were characterized by uneven power dynamics between occupier and occupied, fading feelings of distrust, and cultural affinity. Franz Lehman’s inconsistent characterizations of the Military Government, German civilians, and non-fraternization indicate the level of complexity in exchanges present in postwar Western Germany. Racial undertones did not factor into these relationships nearly as much as they did when American servicemen interacted with Japanese civilians following the nation’s surrender. Informed by Mire Koikari’s excellent analysis of gender and power, I believe that encounters between American soldiers and German civilians, although cautious at first, grew out of a mutual respect for cultural elements present in each society. American soldiers also realized that German civilians belonged to and represented the imagined but familiar West, while Japanese citizens living under occupation were from the East, regarded as different and in need of modernization. German suffering was not mitigated or erased due to the racially-motivated approach used by American forces in Japan. It is a reality that racism affected the Japanese civilian experience under the American occupation in ways that German civilians simply did not experience.

Because of the time-constraints imposed by this project, I only touched the surface about the wide range of cross-cultural experiences that resulted from German-American interactions. However, potential areas for further research exist in examining how German civilians, indoctrinated for years about the dangers of supposed racial impurity of non-white people, regarded African-American soldiers. I also briefly touched upon the difficulties that Jewish-American soldiers endured when stationed in Germany. A valuable project could further examine how they felt about their role in conquerors in a nation where members of their own
religion had been so mercilessly persecuted. Furthermore, an analysis of homosexual and lesbian relationships between American soldiers and German civilians in Western Germany could provide further nuance to studies of gender and power.
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