Forgotten and Unfulfilled: German Transitions in the French Occupation Zone, 1945-1949

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This thesis titled
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1949

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Abstract

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Forgotten and Unfulfilled: German Transitions in the French Occupation Zone, 1945-1949

Director of Thesis: Mirna Zakic

This thesis examines how local newspapers in the French Occupation Zone of Germany between 1945 and 1949 reflected social change. The words of the press show that, starting in 1945, the Christian narrative was the lens through which ‘average’ Germans conceived of their past and present, understanding the Nazi era as well as war guilt in religious terms. These local newspapers indicate that their respective communities made an early attempt to ‘come to terms with the past.’ This phenomenon is explained by the destruction of World War II, varying Allied approaches to German reconstruction, and unique social conditions in the French Zone. The decline of ardent religiosity in German society between 1945 and 1949 was due mostly to increasing Cold War tensions as well as the return of stability and normality. As Christian rhetoric began to diminish in the local press, so did it in German society as it transitioned to post-Nazism.
Acknowledgments

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Contents

Abstract ................................................................................................................................3
Acknowledgments................................................................................................................4
List of Figures ......................................................................................................................6
List of Abbreviations and Common Foreign Language Terms ...........................................7
1. Introduction: The French Experiment..............................................................................8
   1.1. Between Us and Them: The FBZ, 1945-1949 ............................................................15
   1.2. Newspapers as a Historical Source .............................................................................23
   1.3. Outline.........................................................................................................................28
2. “A Synthesis of God and World”: The First Year After Hitler........................................31
   2.1. The German Past, Present, and Future in 1945...........................................................34
   2.2. Spirituality in the Press, 1945-1946 ............................................................................43
   2.3. Christmas and New Year’s as Turning Points ............................................................56
3. Vergangenheitsbewältigung from 1945-1947................................................................66
   3.1. Franco-German Reconciliation, 1945-1947...............................................................69
   3.2. Politics in the Press, 1945-1947..................................................................................81
   3.3. Denazification, Purges, and War Crimes Trials..........................................................88
   4.1. Christianity’s Denouement or Politicization? ...........................................................106
   4.2. Reflections ‘Before New Tasks’................................................................................114
References................................................................................................................................120
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1: Photo of corpses</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2. Close-up of corpses</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# List of Abbreviations and Common Foreign Language Terms

## Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACC</td>
<td>Allied Control Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDU</td>
<td>Christlich Demokratische Union (Christian Democratic Union)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DP</td>
<td>Displaced Person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAC</td>
<td>European Advisory Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FBZ</td>
<td>Französische Besatzungszone (French Occupation Zone)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCS</td>
<td>Joint Chiefs of Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KPD</td>
<td>Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands (Communist Party of Germany)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SED</td>
<td>Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (Socialist Unity Party of Germany)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPD</td>
<td>Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (Social Democratic Party of Germany)</td>
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## Common Foreign Language Terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abendland</td>
<td>Occident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Épuration</td>
<td>Purge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entnazifizierung</td>
<td>Denazification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kollektivschuld</td>
<td>Collective guilt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land/Länder</td>
<td>Federal [German] state/s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitläufer</td>
<td>Fellow travelers (average Germans complicit with Nazism)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitschuld</td>
<td>Complicity; literally ‘shared guilt’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressepolitik</td>
<td>Press politics, policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Die Schuldfrage</td>
<td>The guilt question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stunde Null</td>
<td>‘Zero Hour’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sündenbock</td>
<td>Sinning ram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vergangenheitsbewältigung</td>
<td>Process of ‘coming to terms with’ or mastering the past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wendepunkt</td>
<td>Turning point</td>
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</table>
1. Introduction: The French Experiment

[What did the onion juice do? It did what the world and the sorrows of the world could not do. It made them cry. At last they were able to cry again. To cry properly, without restraint, to cry like mad. The tears flowed and washed everything away. The rain came. The dew. Oskar has a vision of floodgates opening. Of dams bursting in the spring floods. What is the name of that river that overflows every spring and the government does nothing to stop it?]

– Günter Grass, The Tin Drum

Novelist Günter Grass wrote these words in West Germany in 1959, ten years after its founding. The chapter in The Tin Drum from which this excerpt is taken tells the story of the character Oskar Matzerath’s visit to a club called the Onion Cellar, in which patrons cut into onions to provoke crying. Grass implied in this chapter that Germans had not come to terms with the horrors of the Nazi era, calling the 1900s the “tearless century.”

The Federal Republic in the 1950s has otherwise been criticized as a period of collective amnesia, in which German citizens tended to “selectively remember” only the more comfortable aspects of their past. The connection between a failure to grieve and to ‘come to terms with the past’ was solidified in the first decade of the Federal Republic when it seemed many former Nazis were prospering in the postwar era. Grief became an oft-employed literary trope, while ‘confronting’ the past was its counterpart in political and historical discourse. Yet, at the same time, the political and cultural rehabilitation of

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2 Ibid.
4 Germany’s inability to mourn for the past takes a central role in Heinrich Böll’s Billiards at Half-past Nine (New York: McGraw Hill, 1962), similar to The Tin Drum. A scholarly approach came with Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich’s 1967 study, titled
Germany after World War II that began with occupation is generally considered an outstanding success.\textsuperscript{5} Perhaps it was precisely Chancellor Konrad Adenauer’s diplomatic soft-pedaling of collective guilt that can partially explain Germany’s successful pacification, as Konrad Jarausch and others have suggested.\textsuperscript{6} Though the 1950s would see quieter public remembrance of the past, this thesis proposes recognition of a brief period of roughly two years after World War II in which the French Occupation Zone (Französische Besatzungszone, or FBZ) saw regular debates over the meaning of the Nazi era and of German guilt.

The intersection of French occupation policy and the unique characteristics of the FBZ created an environment in which local newspapers spurred public introspection. The accepted narrative that German society progressed directly from the Nazi era, to postwar ‘day-to-day’ life in the rubble, to polarized Cold War ideologies has left out a critical step. In fact, the German press in the FBZ, divorced from the journalistic practices of the Goebbels era, did much in search of Grass’s metaphorical onion; these newspapers sought cogent, often religious narratives with which to come to terms with the past and mourn its victims. This process was aided largely by the French approach to rebuilding Germany, which subordinated institutional purging to collective guilt. In other words, they attempted to open the floodgates of which Grass wrote. However, French power would be dwarfed by the posturing of the United States and Soviet Union in 1947 and

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beyond, and West Germans would be enveloped into ideological warfare with the East. This early Christian confrontation of collective guilt would be diminished, as would many French aims in occupation policy, by Germans as well as history.

The impending conflict between the Western and Eastern blocs gave way to a culture of polarized political ideologies termed the ‘Cold War binary.’ The extreme poles of communism and capitalism have been employed by Jeffrey Herf and others to explain the culture and national identity of various countries during the second half of the twentieth century. This view of society is an important component of the two Germanies starting in 1949, but the preceding period of occupation requires a more nuanced model. While East and West Germans formed their identity as the antithesis of the other, the legacy of Nazism was not merely an element of their enemy’s ideology, but had its own implications. National Socialism was another ‘pole’ of the Cold War, at least in Germany, in addition to capitalist democracy and communism – though it impacted identity in absentia. A discussion of German ‘memory culture’ in the twentieth century should move beyond the global Cold War binary model to include Nazism’s cultural influence.

This thesis engages with a number of important works. The historiography of German Vergangenheitsbewältigung has largely depicted ‘coming to terms with the past’ as a latent process, only truly setting in during the 1960s. In terms of political culture, Herf has shown how German memory was divided after 1949. The two primary competing narratives were based on political ideologies: communism in East Germany

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7 Herf, *Divided Memory*.
8 Ibid.
and capitalist democracy in the West. There is, indeed, room for the importance of Christianity in the early occupation era in his ‘Multiple Restorations’ thesis, which posits that different strands of German anti-fascist tradition gained prominence after 1945. However, Herf’s narrative of the first two years of occupation focuses mainly on German political and intellectual elites. This thesis, on the other hand, considers the words of community leaders – primarily the press – to evaluate a more proletarian response to the destruction of the war. Not only was Catholicism more important to the average German in the FBZ after 1945, but politics were rejected with near totality. Of course, touting conservative, Christian values propped up the CDU to some degree in its early years; however, the unwillingness to take sides politically makes the early postwar press unique. Therefore, while Herf was right in characterizing political ideologies as central after 1947, and even constituting the basis of West and East German identity, this thesis argues this was a transition away from a Biblical paradigm, not Nazism.

This evidence shows, in agreement with Richard Bessel’s Germany 1945, that there was a critical period of ‘shell shock’ in Germany after the war. The effect of this disorientation in the FBZ was a return to spirituality, which itself rebelled against political ideology between 1945 and 1947. Though the inhabitants of southwest Germany would embrace democratic and capitalist values in the Cold War, the first years saw the opposite of this. Bessel mentions religious fervor in passing, but his focus therein is mostly on the clergy and higher ranking Church officials; this illustrates a gap in the literature. Religiosity is generally ignored by historians except when religious affairs are

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9 Herf, Divided Memory, pp. 3-5.
the subject of the research. Otherwise, religion receives little or no attention. In both cases, however, the congregation is never the focus, but the church leaders and officials themselves. This is logical, since discussing elites always provides the historian more documentation with which to work. However, this type of work is essentially a political history, except with the Church as an organization rather than a government or political figure. This thesis instead seeks to provide a social history of Germans in the FBZ after World War II with a focus on their religiosity, since it was so obviously important. While the actions of clergy were important, examining the impact of religion on the congregations themselves provides an interesting counterpoint to the accepted political narratives.

The later occupation years and the Adenauer era saw a settling of wartime duress and an initiation of a selective memory of the Nazi era.\(^\text{11}\) This has given rise to the perception that early Cold War Germany was simply a continuation of the Nazi era – the generation of 1968 certainly constructed their identity in antithesis to their parents. Robert Moeller has shown both the continuities and changes in German society in the Adenauer era.\(^\text{12}\) Though there were many instances in which Nazi indoctrination persisted in German culture after 1945, this thesis focuses on the ways society in the FBZ made a break with the past. Indeed, as some have argued, the most destructive tendencies and values of Nazi Germany were eradicated after the regime’s capitulation.\(^\text{13}\) Though many former Nazi Party members may have been in positions of power and influence after


\(^{13}\) Jarausch, *After Hitler*. 
1945, the West German government was no longer perpetrating genocide and waging war – in fact, they were largely sidelined, militarily, throughout the Cold War.

The population demographic represented in this thesis project is mostly rural and Catholic. The French Occupation Zone was located in southwest Germany, a heavily Catholic area. This, combined with many French administrators’ favoring of Church affairs, helps explain the overwhelmingly positive attitude toward spirituality. And, while the newspapers themselves may have originated in cities, their circulation was extended to numerous communities in their surrounding areas. There were no large, international cities in the FBZ; the largest was Freiburg, since the French army was ousted from Stuttgart before occupation began. Also, since this population was in the geographically opposite corner from Prussia, as well as Hitler’s conservative support base in Bavaria, inhabitants of the French Zone were certainly not the most ardently Nazified. In fact, as Robert Gellately has shown, rural, Catholic populations in southern Germany showed the most resistance to the regime and the Gestapo during World War II.14

The following thesis guides the reader through publications that these Germans read in the second half of the 1940s in the FBZ. The source materials for this project are *Die Rheinpfalz* of Ludwigshafen am Rhein, the *Freiburger Nachrichten* of Freiburg im Breisgau, and the *Schwäbisches Tagblatt* of Tübingen. Each of these emerged in September 1945 – except for the *Freiburger Nachrichten*, which changed its name to the *Badische Zeitung* in February 1946 – and published regularly into the founding of the Federal Republic in May 1949. *Die Rheinpfalz*’s circulation was estimated at 65,000

copies in October 1945, and had no political leaning (though outright party affiliation was
banned, certain newspapers still showed ‘tendencies’).\textsuperscript{15} The \textit{Freiburger Nachrichten}
tallied between 120,000 and 140,000 copies in October 1945, and leaned anti-fascist and
democratic-socialist.\textsuperscript{16} Finally, the \textit{Tagblatt} was reported as distributing between 70,000
and 115,000 copies in the same report as the other two, leaning “conservative and center-
Catholic.”\textsuperscript{17} As is apparent from the above descriptions, the sample set of newspapers in
this thesis were quite politically diverse, at least in theory, which makes their mostly
unified message all the more noteworthy. The circulation of each of these newspapers
increased by tens of thousands through the end of 1945 and in the first three months of
1946.\textsuperscript{18} These newspapers show that Germans were confronted with the crimes of the
Nazi era by their own countrymen rather than only through trials and denazification, and
that this local interpretation of guilt was based on Christian ideas.

Seen through this lens, several other perplexing characteristics of postwar society
in the French Zone are more explicable. First, Franco-German rapprochement was part of
an understanding of World War II as a force of its own, divorced from the actions of its
combatants. The shared experience of defeat and destruction in the war was a source of
solidarity for the two nations. Next, the concepts of collective guilt (\textit{Kollektivschuld}) and
scapegoating Nazi high command, though generally understood as mutually exclusive,
were conceptualized by many journalists as complementary aspects of war guilt.

journaux allemands de la zone française d’occupation}, quoted in Stephan Schölzel, \textit{Die
Pressepolitik in der französischen Besatzungszone 1945-1949} (Mainz: Hase & Koehler
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{18} Schölzel, \textit{Die Pressepolitik}, pp. 73-75.
Collective guilt was understood by many as equivalent to the Christian notion of original sin, and scapegoating Nazi elites was another part of atonement. Why Germans wanted to come to terms with the past in 1945 is clear – avoiding punishment, preserving self-respect and establishing a “reason to live” are but a few obvious reasons. This project, on the other hand, offers an explanation of how this rationalization occurred: Germans employed to the Christian narrative to explain the Nazi past and the ruination of the present.

1.1. Between Us and Them: The FBZ, 1945-1949

French participation in the occupation of postwar Germany was not a unanimous desire in Big Three meetings in the final years of World War II; that they received an occupation zone to administer was due largely to Winston Churchill’s insistence. Yet, this decision was not entirely absent of French agency; Charles de Gaulle sent his forces deep into Germany with the Allied invasion of 1945 to establish a foothold as well as to repair French prestige. Even though the French had to pull out of some of the territories they initially reached – even Stuttgart – they critically improved their bargaining position.

Utter disaster and chaos marked the summer of 1945; many of the ‘Displaced Persons’ (DPs) who began the postwar era in Germany would be moved elsewhere, while the influx of millions of ethnic Germans from across Europe, as well as returning

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19 Tu Viens en Allemagne, 1945, Gouvernement militaire de la zone française d'occupation, Direction de l'éducation publique, p. 2. All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

soldiers, colored life for the majority of Germans at home.\textsuperscript{21} Furthermore, a recent study of public health in the early occupation era has revealed that the Allies, preceding the final capitulation of Germany, drastically overestimated living conditions, and thus were not prepared to combat the rampant disease and starvation.\textsuperscript{22} These were the defining characteristics of early occupation; as such, it is plausible and even logical to imagine that Germans simply didn’t have the time or energy to contemplate \textit{Mitschuld} (‘shared guilt’) and the Nazi past. The story in the French Zone was, however, more nuanced than this because it differed from the other three zones in two key ways.

First, the FBZ received a tiny proportion of the between twelve and fifteen million German refugees from other parts of Europe; the French only agreed to accepting 150,000 refugees, and then actually followed through with accommodating 4,500.\textsuperscript{23} With a population of almost six million residents, the ratio of refugees to natives was roughly 1:1,289, compared to 1:6 and 1:5 in the British and American Zones, respectively, by 1949; for all intents and purposes, the FBZ had no ethnic German refugees until the merging of the three zones in 1948-49, by which time assimilation had become less hostile.\textsuperscript{24} The ‘unprecedented refugee crisis’ experienced in the other three zones was

\textsuperscript{24} These ratios were calculated from figures given in Michael Gehler, \textit{Three Germanies: West Germany, East Germany and the Berlin Republic} (London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 2011), p. 16 and Moeller, \textit{West Germany}, p. 54. There is some debate over the number of DPs in the FBZ. Willis estimates as many as 100,000 refugees arrived in the FBZ by the
aided by the presence of foreigners, as either occupation personnel or other DPs, as a “[catalyst for] integration.” If the influx of refugees was perhaps the foremost dynamic of the early postwar period elsewhere in Germany, in addition to the destruction of the war and burden of war guilt, their virtual absence in the FBZ was equally important to society. This thesis, therefore, documents public opinion in a zone drastically different from the other three.

The second key characteristic is that the FBZ was kept more isolated than the other three zones while the French pressed for a fundamentally different future for Germany. The Americans and British agreed to merge their zones in December 1946, though economic and administrative unity would be months in the making. The Soviets, in attempting to install a communist regime in postwar Germany, also kept border travel to a minimum to keep out Western influence. This zonal autonomy had not been the original intention of the Big Three, but with the four occupying powers wishing to remake Germany in their conflicting images, it is not surprising that attempts to unify quickly came to stalemate.

Importantly, as John Lewis Gaddis has argued, Joseph Stalin’s desire for Germany to institute communism from 1945 onwards did not initially translate to a desire to divide Germany so long as the Soviet Occupation Zone would remain in the Soviet

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premier’s sphere of influence. Surprisingly, the greatest obstacle to early agreement on the German question came from the French camp – not the future Cold War superpowers or the British. Their stubbornness was due to their insistence on the so-called French Thesis as well as the insult of not having been invited to the Yalta and Potsdam Conferences (though they were given an occupation zone and a seat at the Allied Control Council). The effect of this isolation was to delay the transition in the FBZ to “America’s Germany,” as William Hitchcock has called the future Federal Republic.

The French Thesis was fueled by a desire to prevent German resurgence and rebuild the French economy, and had several goals. First, it sought to reorganize Germany along new borders in the west: the Ruhr district would be ceded to France, the Saar mines would be under French economic control, and the Rhineland would be internationalized, similar to the settlement after World War I. Second, they insisted on a decentralized Germany, moving eventually toward a federal system with weak national powers. This goal contrasted the most with those of the other three powers, who sought, eventually, to restore full German autonomy. Finally, the French sought continued rights German economic resources for reparations and much needed coal. The pursuit of these goals within the FBZ was the source of one significant aspect of Franco-German relations – alienation and distrust.

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28 Willis, *The French in Germany*, pp. 31-32.
The French attempt to maintain peace in Europe, particularly in Germany, necessitated rapprochement with their former enemies. Occupation policy, therefore, was suspended between the retribution outlined in the French Thesis and the olive branch of reconciliation. Two main personalities in French occupation command embodied these disparate goals (though their duties were not so neatly or simply divided): Marie-Pierre Koenig and Emile Laffon. The Commander in Chief, General Koenig, presided over three areas of German occupation and their corresponding leader – the Military Commander in the FBZ, the commanding general in the French sector of Berlin, and the Administrator General of the FBZ, Laffon. Indeed, the French attempt to counterbalance military and civilian administration in their zone differed from the other three, and was ultimately a failure – though the personality differences between the two men were due to more than simply soldier-civilian resentment. Laffon preferred a speedy conclusion to the exploitation of Germany to aid his cultural programs and reconciliation of the two populations; as such, Franco-German relations in the zone were influenced by two conflicting intentions.

The division of administrative politics in the FBZ paralleled debates in France itself. The myth of a singular ‘France’ during and after World War II was created largely by the leader of the Free French, Charles de Gaulle, who declared in 1944, “[Paris is] liberated by itself, by its own people with the help of the armies of France, with the

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support and aid of France as a whole…” Yet, in reality, political and civil infighting were more characteristic of French society before 1944, and after; despite de Gaulle’s whitewashing of the French past, present politics had no cohesion. The most substantial and codified form of Nazi collaboration was in the Vichy regime, which covered a whole two-fifths of the country. A second group of Frenchmen with questionable records in the Nazi era were citizens of Alsace-Lorraine, which had been officially annexed into the Third Reich – as opposed to being under military occupation or ruled by French collaborators. Many had been conscripted into military service and had played a role in various war crimes; among the most infamous was the massacre at Oradour.

The chaos surrounding épuration (purification) in France paralleled their treatment of former Nazis in the FBZ, where the English word denazification was even dropped and changed to épuration. Peter Köpf has asserted that administration in the FBZ was staffed by numerous Vichyites and Alsatians, the allegiances of which likely affected their management of the German press. Society in the FBZ similarly grappled with who was guilty; while this conversation about the past was impacted largely by French debates, there were other influential factors as well.

The Catholic Church was an important agent in the FBZ from the outset of occupation as one of the only institutions in Germany, and internationally, to claim total

34 It is not surprising that the French adopted a word for denazification from their native language, but it is noteworthy that it was not a Gallicized cognate. In contrast, the German word for denazification was ‘Entnazifizierung,’ essentially a direct translation.
opposition to Nazism after World War II – a myth that took several decades to lose credibility. While it is true that some Catholics attempted to undermine Nazi planning in various ways, the Church remained mostly silent on Hitler’s ambitions, and many members of the clergy were German nationalists subject to the same influences as anyone else. The complicity of many German religious leaders in the Holocaust was unrealized by Germans in the immediate postwar era; this dynamic is also reflected in newspaper articles written by clergy, showing that that the press sought the counsel of the Church in their grappling with the legacy of Nazism. Since this project is not concerned with an institutional history of the Church in the FBZ, their actions will only be considered as they intersected German *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (‘coming to terms with the past’) in the local press, and how their words contributed to the spirituality evident in society.

As the title of this section indicates, the French were not so simply allied with the West in 1945 – although this is not to suggest they were aligned with the Soviets either. France was instead deeply divided; de Gaulle was certainly a powerful figure for the right, but the left, including both socialists and communists, had success at the polls in 1945 as well. The most successful tropes in French politics in 1945 were still the Resistance and anti-fascism – communism and de Gaulle’s right coexisted briefly in this

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37 Tony Judt, *Postwar*, p. 79
lacuna.38 The vacillation of French politics was apparent in their actions in the ACC. Their unwillingness to relinquish control of German industry and accept the borders suggested by the other Allies came from a distrust of both the Soviets and the Anglo-Americans. After all, as James Sheehan has argued, it was unclear to the world which side of Stalin would dominate his politics after 1945 – his thirst for short term communist expansion or his willingness to explore diplomacy with the West to maintain peace in Europe.39

By 1947, the FBZ began transitioning to the Cold War. Though it is not difficult to find traces of the impending conflict in the years preceding 1947 and even World War II, these are mostly found in diplomatic channels and high politics. Culturally speaking, there was a definite ‘dawn’ of the Cold War in 1947. In this regard, it is salient to remember that the widespread anti-communism persistent in the West throughout the first half of the twentieth century did not equate to the Cold War. Several key events in French politics and their handling of Germany in 1947 likely caused social change in the FBZ. First, French Prime Minister Paul Ramadier purged the communist party from his cabinet, signaling “[France’s gradual move] toward open acceptance of the ‘Western Strategy.’”40 Next, the French Thesis was completely rejected by the Allies at the Moscow Conference in spring 1947, who found their proposals to be unrealistic and

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demanding; as such, the French were forced to reevaluate their position toward Anglo-American plans for Germany.\footnote{Willis, *The French in Germany*, pp. 41-44.}

Finally, the unveiling of the Marshall Plan in mid-1947 gave France a way to bolster their economy without having to rely on the exploitation of the FBZ, which greatly diminished their resistance to German unification. Though the French also benefitted from Allied aid before 1947, they felt burdened to rebuild the Germans as well, and were as a result dually relieved by Marshall dollars. Though many other political events contributed to the ‘outbreak’ of the Cold War in 1947, these were the most significant in the FBZ. This project is concerned with the words of local journalists rather than the rhetoric of high ranking politicians and the warnings of intellectuals; 1947 was indeed the dawn of the Cold War in German society.

1.2. Newspapers as a Historical Source

What is the historical value of newspapers? Though the press in the French Zone was monitored, their ideas should not be simply dismissed as propaganda; the story of the rehabilitation of the German press in the FBZ is more complex than this. Instead, the ideas and opinions of journalists should be considered in a discussion of German society since they were a part of it. Indeed, the idea that the press in the FBZ was simply an “instrument of the occupying power” is questionable, above all, because of the centrality of religion.\footnote{Köpf, *Schreiben nach jeder Richtung*, p. 172.} It could be argued, if anything, that the newspapers were tools of the Catholic Church – though this is a bit farfetched as well. In fact, French civilian
administrators were suspicious of the interjections of Catholic bishops – who saw themselves as intermediaries between the occupiers and Germans – and sought to keep them out of dealings with the German public for the first two years.\textsuperscript{43} Therefore, in a sense, the two checked either in their governing of the German psyche.

The press in the FBZ was able to express their ideas somewhat more freely than has often been assumed. Indeed, Stephan Schölzel’s \textit{Die Pressepolitik in der französischen Besatzungszone 1945-1949}, the only in-depth study of press policy in the FBZ, argues that, although French authorities recognized early on that German newspapers could be “ideal instruments of propaganda,” Laffon and others nonetheless “advised extremely cautious and gentle implementation [of censorship] on the part of the press officers.”\textsuperscript{44} The following paragraphs outline the development of this press policy.

The French rehabilitated the German press in their zone based on the American model, which involved first dismantling the press entirely, then establishing official occupation periodicals, and finally allowing nonpartisan German newspapers to reapply for a license.\textsuperscript{45} Thirty newspapers obtained licenses in the FBZ during the occupation era.\textsuperscript{46} French press censorship has often be described as the most strict of the three Western occupation zones;\textsuperscript{47} yet, as will be discussed in the following chapters, there are examples of blatant disapproval of the French regime in the newspapers. Nonetheless, the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{43} In “Die Bischöfe und die deutsch-französische Annäherung nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg.” \textit{Historisches Jahrbuch} (Vol. 132, 2012: pp. 110-123), Michael Kissener argues that the Laffon’s distrust of the interfering clergy waylaid their ability to aid in the administration of the FBZ at least until his resignation in 1947.
\item \textsuperscript{44} Schölzel, \textit{Die Pressepolitik}, p. 80.
\item \textsuperscript{45} Eschenburg, \textit{Jahre der Besatzung}, p. 155-156.
\item \textsuperscript{46} Köpf, \textit{Schreiben nach jeder Richtung}, p. 29.
\item \textsuperscript{47} Eschenburg, \textit{Jahre der Besatzung}, p. 95.
\end{itemize}
French saw censorship as an integral aspect of German reeducation. This idea had parallels in other areas as well; for instance, the Allies made an exception to their eventual installment of a free democratic system in (West) Germany by banning the Nazi Party in 1945.

Each chief editor was given leeway to “direct” their newspaper, but there were still press officers who were tasked with observing them. From an administrative standpoint, there were several officials above these officers.\(^{48}\) Emile Laffon superseded everyone as Administrator General and had the most say in the overall implementation of censorship, which was somewhat lax as already mentioned. Below him was the Director of Information General Jean Arnaud with Colonel Emile Loutre in charge of Press Section.\(^{49}\) Arnaud resigned alongside Laffon in late 1947, and was replaced by General Hepp.\(^{50}\) Despite the tension between Koenig and Laffon, the latter was mostly left to administer press policy unimpeded, which meant the more leftist, socialist-leaning approach. Laffon and Arnaud’s replacement in 1947 by Koenig and Hepp – both conservative and with military backgrounds – coincided with the general social trends that were occurring, which are discussed in chapter three.

The ban on politics in the FBZ press was reduced in stages, but not completely lifted until West German sovereignty in 1949.\(^{51}\) In March 1946, the French occupation administration, spearheaded by Loutre, allowed parties to print their political platforms, as well as provide commentary on current events, as long as this section was clearly

\(^{48}\) Schölzel, *Die Pressepolitik*, p. 36.
\(^{49}\) Schölzel, *Die Pressepolitik*, p. 37.
\(^{50}\) Schölzel, *Die Pressepolitik*, p. 39. General Hepp’s first name is not given.
\(^{51}\) Eschenburg, *Jahre der Besatzung*, p. 156.
marked in the newspaper.\textsuperscript{52} By 1947, they had progressed to allowing each of the four parties to operate an entire newspaper; in many cases this meant establishing a new press, but other times existing newspapers were repurposed.\textsuperscript{53} None of the three newspapers in this thesis project were party organs, but \textit{Die Rheinpfalz} did have small sections for party propaganda through summer and fall 1946.

Officially, by August 1945, European Advisory Commission directive 12 (which was later reiterated by Joint Chiefs of Staff directive 1143) had solidified the churches’ ‘privileged’ status in occupied Germany with the creation of the Allied Religious Affairs Committee.\textsuperscript{54} Though General Koenig himself concurred with those who sought to restore religious freedoms and thus liberalism in Germany, the implementation of church policy actually lay in Emile Laffon’s administrative apparatus, who was decidedly colder toward the churches.\textsuperscript{55} His response to religious leaders attempting to assert themselves as mediators in interactions between occupation troops and the German population was often to neither expressly permit nor forbid their actions.\textsuperscript{56} In terms of the press, the ACC gave the churches more leeway in terms of press censorship;\textsuperscript{57} however, due to Laffon’s indifference to church affairs, this played out more clearly in the British and American Occupation Zones than in the French. For instance, a number of openly religious publications emerged in the other Western zones –such as \textit{Christ und Welt} and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{52} Schölzel, \textit{Die Pressepolitik}, p. 107.
\item \textsuperscript{53} Eschenburg, \textit{Jahre der Besatzung}, p. 156.
\item \textsuperscript{55} Greschat, “Die Kirchenpolitik,” pp. 230-231.
\item \textsuperscript{56} Kissener, “Die Bischöfe,” pp. 110-123.
\item \textsuperscript{57} Greschat, “Die Kirchenpolitik,” p. 229.
\end{itemize}
Sonntagsblatt, both of Stuttgart.\textsuperscript{58} It is not that the newspapers presented in this essay were completely foreign to the type of religious influence in the above Stuttgarter journals, but they were certainly not official church periodicals.

Given that the ACC approved of a certain degree of church influence in Germany alongside their own, it is likely that Laffon’s administration considered its hands tied on church matters. Nonetheless, neither allowing nor forbidding church interference seems to have extended to the press as well. The immediate assertion of religious ideas in the press in fall 1945, from the first edition of seemingly every newspaper, indicates that the ACC’s official endorsement of and Laffon’s disregard for the church created an opening for religious expression in the FBZ without, at the same time, as much mandating as in the American and British Zones. Therefore, it is unsurprising that Christianity was so central in the press in the early postwar years – but this does not indicate mere propaganda. Similarly, is the endorsement of religion by both the Allies and Germans not reflective of a Zeitgeist? Put differently, the fact that many officials agreed on the centrality of religion to German reconstruction supports, rather than disproves, the argument that Christianity was a cornerstone of German society in the occupation era.

In \textit{Schreiben nach jeder Richtung: Goebbels-Propagandisten in der westdeutschen Nachkriegspresse}, Peter Köpf charges that the FBZ was the home to the most ex-Nazi journalists of any zone; further research is required to corroborate this statistic.\textsuperscript{59} If Köpf is correct, the views of these Germans may have likely been reflective

\textsuperscript{58} Köpf, \textit{Schreiben nach jeder Richtung}, pp. 69-76.

\textsuperscript{59} Köpf, \textit{Schreiben nach jeder Richtung}, p. 171-172. To knowledge, there has been no other study of the press in the FBZ with the same focus on individuals and newspapers as
of the entire population. Put differently, if journalists had to come to terms with their compliance with Nazism, their coping mechanisms would have been basically equivalent to those of ‘average’ Germans. Such a dynamic would also uphold this thesis – that many, but not all, Germans made a cultural break with the Nazi past in 1945. In either case, the words of the press – relatively unencumbered by the French censors, when compared to the Nazi or Soviet press – should be seen as part of the population in which they were written. German journalists were no less citizens than any of their country folk, and subject to the same cultural and structural forces. Furthermore, dismissing them as ‘Goebbels propagandists’ doesn’t take into account what they were writing about the past; indeed, their ideas were quite the opposite of the racist and nationalistic propaganda that marked the previous era.

1.3. Outline

The following chapters give the reader a window into the German psyche from 1945 until 1949, and offer an interpretative framework for understanding why issues were presented as they were. The first chapter will establish references to Stunde Null (‘Zero Hour’) in the press in 1945, and what this periodization suggests about the FBZ. It will be shown that German society made an important break with the past in 1945 despite the presence of former Nazis in prominent positions in the community. The press agreed upon the centrality of spirituality to society, and that its disappearance during the Nazi era was the foremost reason for the evils that occurred. The cultural significance of Köpf’s. For example, Schölzel focuses on press policy rather than the journals themselves.


*Stunde Null* was that Nazi political structures were completely uprooted, even if many of the same civil servants were turning the gears of the machinery of local government. This chapter argues that the French approach to occupation created a situation in which the German confrontation of the past took a spiritual turn.

The second chapter will trace the first half of occupation, from 1945 until 1947. The press indicates that while spirituality began to gradually decline in importance in German culture, it was more important to their understanding of the past than secular ideologies like democracy or nationalism. Instead of thematically exploring the early occupation era as in the first chapter, the second will examine change over time. This chapter contributes to the study of 1945 by positing that German culture changed fundamentally in addition to the drastic physical destruction experienced. As such, this discussion treats 1945 as a singular moment, which James Sheehan has described as, “a time suspended between past and present when history had come to an end.”

The resurgence of Christianity in this time was revolutionary, a wave of religious sentiment which relatively quickly gave way to secular reaction, due greatly to the Cold War. To what extent a more secular, ‘normal’ postwar environment emerged in the final years of the 1940s, alongside Cold War politics, is the subject of the third chapter, which will show how the Cold War paradigm came to subsume the religious narrative of the past. While some aspects of Christianity became part of the new war on communism, others lost centrality with the early French approach to occupation. In the ensuing years,

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60 Sheehan, *Where Have All the Soldiers Gone?*, p. 144.
many of these early attempts to come to terms with the Nazi past were neglected along with French ideas for rebuilding Germany.
2. “A Synthesis of God and World”\textsuperscript{61}: The First Year After Hitler

The belief that the capitulation of the Nazi regime in May 1945 was the turning of a new leaf was a defining feature of early postwar Germany. Residents of the French Zone believed they were no longer living in Hitler’s Germany; what had been their daily reality was now a part of the past. Of course, 1945 had no actual tangibility. The Nazi past was no more ‘behind them’ than any other era in history; turning points like these, or \textit{Wendepunkte}, are cultural constructions. However, what gives 1945 – and ‘Zero Hour’ (\textit{Stunde Null}) – credence as a definitive turning point is the universality with which European society embraced it as such. Put differently, the fact that the end of the Nazi regime in 1945 was, at the time, interpreted by so many as a new chapter in German history gives it a degree of social reality, at least from a historical standpoint. At the very least, it can help explain some of the cultural dynamics emerging during that time.

To be certain, for every German in the postwar era who wrote about regretting the past, there was another who maintained their radical racist views for the rest of their life. However, when evaluating a culture’s ‘consensus’ opinion, it is important to note the difference between the taboo beliefs of fringe radicals and what was considered socially acceptable; Nazism became taboo in 1945.

The first section of this chapter argues that 1945 was indeed a year of significant cultural change in Germany. Such an argument is sometimes dismissed by those who point to the presence of ex-Nazis in postwar institutions – even in the press.\textsuperscript{62} The persistence of many journalists from the Nazi regime into the postwar era should make

\textsuperscript{62} See Köpf, \textit{Schreiben nach jeder Richtung}. 
their ‘about-face’ in 1945 all the more interesting, however. The assumption that similarities in personnel equated to a continuation of Nazi journalism and culture is questionable, yet this is generally the conclusion reached not only in regard to the press, but to other German institutions as well. For example, Peter Köpf’s Schreiben Nach Jeder Richtung characterizes the press in the FBZ as a “safehaven for ‘Ehemaliger’ [former Nazis]” and a mere “instrument of the occupying powers” while also conceding that, due to sympathies within the office of censorship itself, the censors actually employed “lax controls.”

Rather than assuming that corruption characterized the press in the postwar era, this section will evaluate its transformation as a component of German society. In fact, the primary descriptors of the Nazi press – that it was propagandistic, racist, ardently nationalistic, and anti-democratic – were no longer the case after 1945, and their praise of the French occupiers was not necessarily coerced. Instead, newspapers openly attacked the legacy of Nazism – especially its propaganda.

The journalists did not explicitly accept their personal guilt for the Nazi era, but instead focused on the objectivity of the new German press. Their implied innocence in regard to the crimes of the Nazi regime were certainly erroneous, but not without reason. German journalists, as citizens, sought to demonstrate their innocence in the face of denazification, which could oust them from the profession – referring to one’s own participation in Goebbels’s propaganda machine would have been counterproductive to this effort. However, newspapers in 1945 and beyond did not exactly lie about the guilt of any specific journalist, or really discuss the personnel themselves at all (that is, in regard to war guilt; the staff’s position in postwar politics was sometimes discussed). They

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63 Köpf, Schreiben nach jeder Richtung, pp. 171-172.
instead alluded to the restoration of journalistic integrity and to the press as an institution, which was to help German society come to terms with the Nazi past.

With the symbolic rehabilitation of the press, 1945 ushered in a new era of German history. There were certainly a number of continuities from Nazism; since those have been well-documented, this thesis instead focuses on the changes.\textsuperscript{64} Though certain subtleties or cultural tendencies may have transferred from Nazi Germany, the fact that the most destructive cornerstones of that era had been curbed and made taboo constitutes an important break with the past. Periodizing the postwar era in this way provides the context for the discussion of German culture in the second section. Religion became the core of ‘Germanness’ in the immediate postwar era, above political ideology. This dynamic will be explored through the creation of a spiritual \textit{Stunde Null} myth in the press. With the first Christmas of the postwar era approaching, the press in the FBZ in fall 1945 used Christian imagery to allude to the salvation of the German people from the sins of the Nazi era. New Year’s 1946 further substantiated their belief that Germany had made a break with its past. The press indicates that religiosity was the core of German culture in the FBZ in 1945 as the nation sought to create a ‘synthesis of God and World.’\textsuperscript{65}


2.1. The German Past, Present, and Future in 1945

Newspapers in the French occupation zone had a unified message in 1945, above all concerning the role of spirituality in the post-Nazi era. Journalists in the French Occupation Zone saw their words as critical to the reconstruction of German society after the Nazi regime. In the first days of publication, they established the mission of the new German press, and that of their respective newspapers. This section will first address the raison d’être of the press, which was twofold. First, the Nazis’ usage of journalism as a tool for propaganda was recognized in September 1945 as the postwar press distanced itself from that legacy. Second, these newspapers saw their role in society as critical to helping Germans come to terms with the crimes of the past. Only a democratic system with a respect for human rights could defy the persistence of the Nazi regime and, accordingly, community discussion was to be the process through which Germans formed their government. The press was an integral aspect of this process. Articles about the political history and future of Germany were published starting in fall 1945 and continued beyond the founding of West Germany in 1949. Finally, this section will explore the most promoted political goal of the early press, their support of Franco-German rapprochement and reconciliation. Germans conceived of the war as the source of defeat and misery for both the nations – rather than focusing on the role of enemy combatants.

Each of the newspapers in this thesis included a mission statement on the front page of their respective first editions. Two of these even bore the same title – an article titled “To Our Readers” was featured in Die Rheinpfalz and the Freiburger
Nachrichten.\textsuperscript{66} The equivalent article in the \textit{Schwäbisches Tagblatt} titled “Before New Tasks” carried a message similar to the others: Germans had a difficult task ahead of them to reconstruct both the material and ideological destruction left by the Nazi regime.\textsuperscript{67} The manipulation of the press had been a critical aspect of the degradation of human liberties under Hitler. Therefore, the press was itself meant to be an important step to rehabilitating German culture in the postwar period. \textit{Die Rheinpfalz} elaborated on this, writing that the newspaper took people from every background with a shared goal of building a democratic Germany, described as a “true mirror of the various tendencies,” in which the seeds of democratic thought could be laid.\textsuperscript{68} Newspaper content was an important step in bridging the Nazi past with a more humanitarian and egalitarian future.

A noteworthy aspect of the three abovementioned articles is the lack of the pronoun “we” when referring to the German \textit{Volk}. The writers used “we” when referring to the staff, but never in relation to the people of Germany. This indicates two main beliefs underlying the press in 1945. First was the belief in a pure and objective form of journalism separate from the society in which it functioned and, importantly, the government. This dynamic mirrored the contrast between the political appropriation of newspapers during the Nazi era the journalists frequently reiterated. The previous regime’s deliberate use of the press as propaganda had violated the basic tenets of journalism and invalidated them as newspapers. Edmund Kronenberger succinctly


expressed this idea by stating, “Did the German people keep a newspaper at all in the last years since 1933? No! What was offered to the German people in those years in no way earned the name newspaper.”

This was not the only tradition that Germans understood as having a pure, untouchable ideological core, isolated from Nazism. As we will see in following sections, the churches were seen in the same light – and, as this thesis argues, Christian ethics dominated German thought above political ideologies. As Robert Ericksen and Steven Remy have shown, the university system saw a similar resilience to criticism after World War II because of a belief in scholarly objectivity. Even the German medical tradition was seen as essentially pure, having been corrupted by ‘bad’ Nazi medicine. The rehabilitation of the press, therefore, was yet another stepping stone for German society as it attempted to restore an idealized culture of the past, as in Herf’s ‘Multiple Restorations’ thesis.

The second belief underlying the German journalistic ethos in 1945, as reflected in the tendency to avoid the word “we” when discussing the German people, was the idea that the press was a separate entity from German society and the individuals therein – a gate behind which the road to political revival lay. The newspapers ‘mirrored’ the best characteristics of German anti-fascism as to reinforce them in society – as Edmund

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72 Herf, *Divided Memory*, pp. 1-12.
Kronenberger wrote in an abovementioned quote.\textsuperscript{73} The depiction of the press as a mirror of society was not unique to journalists in the FBZ, as one of today’s internationally renowned news publications Der Spiegel (‘The Mirror’) had its roots in the occupation period as well. With the newspaper as a mirror, Germans would be able to reconfigure postwar society and rebuild the country in accordance with democratic principles. This idea was clearly expressed in the Freiburger Nachrichten in the first newspaper: “[The newspaper’s] goal is good and conscientious reporting, truthful enlightenment about the past and future, and to blaze a clear political path.”\textsuperscript{74} 1945 was the border between the past and future; Germans were to be metaphysically transported from the ‘abyss’ of the Nazi era by institutions such as the press.

The press was not merely to be a representative of the German people – average Germans also participated with letters to the editor. In the Schwäbisches Tagblatt, a section titled “The Reader has the Word” gave citizens a chance to voice their opinions. The following words written by a German citizen were published on 12 October, 1945:

> Broad circles of the population have greeted the appearance of the Schwäbisches Tagblatt with great joy, not only because it offers them interesting reading material, but also because it gives us all the possibility to express \textit{our opinion} and bring the discussion, before one great circle, of what belongs to the nature of a true democracy. [Emphasis in original]\textsuperscript{75}

The Freiburger Nachrichten and Die Rheinpfalz similarly had sections in which community members could have their words printed. The above excerpt indicates that the local communities considered the symbolic importance of a rehabilitated free press as


\textsuperscript{75} Karl Sinner, “Die politische Reinigung,” Schwäbisches Tagblatt, 12 October 1945, p. 4.
crucial as the newspaper staffs themselves. Germans engaged in a discussion over what would constitute their future government and what the past had meant. This dialogue formed the basis for the first episode of German *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, or ‘coming to terms with the past’; the rigidity of early Cold War politics would stall the debates until the 1960s.

Another important task for Germans as they sought to make a break with the Nazi past was embracing their former archenemies – the French. The newspapers indicate an immediate reversal of wartime animosity among the German *Volk* – but this interpretation has limitations. Newspapers seeking the approval of the French would have promoted compliance with their occupation policies. Even so, the importance of this endorsement should not be underemphasized for several reasons. Postwar periods were not always tales of peace and cooperation in western Germany; the German occupation of Alsace-Lorraine in 1871 and the French occupation of the Ruhr in 1923 saw hostility between the two nations. There was also a surprising degree to which the press in the FBZ championed rapprochement, with entire pages dedicated to General Charles de Gaulle. Finally, as discussed in the introduction, newspapers in the postwar era were an important and symbolic aspect of German culture – representative of their respective local populations. Franco-German rapprochement and reconciliation was but one dimension of the press’ spiritual depiction of World War II as apocalyptic.

The press promoted the embracing of both the French nation and its leadership – which included the occupation officials. This was clear in the second edition of *Die Rheinpfalz*, on 3 October, 1945, which featured a full front page article heralding the visit of French Prime Minister Charles de Gaulle to the Palatinate, complete with pictures of
the man and his entourage. Although the French premier had been thorn in the Germans’ sides only a half year earlier, de Gaulle was now referred to as “the savior of France.”76

After the French parade, the newspaper wrote an article describing the event in joyous terms and how well it was received by authorities and commoners alike. The appointed district president of the Palatinate, Dr. Otto Eichenlaub, greeted de Gaulle with a speech stating, as was transcribed in *Die Rheinpfalz*, “if I can be the translator of the feelings and thoughts of the people of the Palatinate, then I say to you with the all my heart that we not only consider the visit from your excellency as a great honor, but that it also gives us great pleasure.”77 While Eichenlaub would have been appointed based on noncompliance to the Hitler regime, the same should not be assumed of the newspaper; only non-partisanship was required for a license.78 The initial pipe dreams of denazification may have proposed purging every ex-Nazi from civil service and community leadership positions, but the hope that Germany could be reconstructed by tens of millions of former resistance soon faded – these numbers didn’t exist. However, the greater goal of denazification, “to destroy German militarism and Nazism,” was achieved over time; establishing a free press was an early step in this process.79

The printing of Eichenlaub’s speech shows that the editorial staff of *Die Rheinpfalz* was interested in promoting friendship with the French. By depicting the

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78 Willis, *The French in Germany*, 181, and Eschenburg, *Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, p. 143.
arrival of the French Prime Minister as a cause for celebration and showing that German political elites gladly cooperated with occupation officials, the newspaper encouraged its readers to do the same. While some individuals in Rhineland and the Palatinate, including some of the newspaper editing staff, potentially resented French occupation, they agreed as community leaders that their official stance was one of support. It is also significant that a full page (the front page, no less) of many newspapers was dedicated to announcing de Gaulle’s upcoming parade, and much of another page celebrating the event afterwards. Die Rheinpfalz, for example, was only four pages in length at that time; since there was no shortage of current events in 1945, in the wake of the greatest war in history, why was the arrival of the symbol of French resistance was allotted so much space in the newspaper? While de Gaulle’s political and diplomatic status by itself certainly warranted press coverage of the visit, this level of enthusiasm suggests that the promotion of Franco-German rapprochement was a focus of the editing staff of Die Rheinpfalz, and indicates an alignment with France before the Cold War began.

The Schwäbisches Tagblatt and Freiburger Nachrichten both had stories similar to Die Rheinpfalz when General de Gaulle visited their respective towns (Tübingen and Freiburg) on his tour of the FBZ. On 4 October, 1945, the Freiburger Nachrichten described the visit of the “premier of the neighboring peoples” as a “meaningful event for Baden.” The accompanying article consumed the entire first page and featured a large picture of de Gaulle. Since the following edition reported on the events of the visit, likewise consuming most of the front page, it is clear that the French premier shared their

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hopes for reconciliation. The Nachrichten wrote, “the French premier urges cooperation in material and moral rebuilding,” and that the Germans greeted him with a “celebratory reception.” The Schwäbisches Tagblatt described the event as such: “Only too long was the Rhine an unbridgeable gap between two [folk] cultures and seemed to be an adverse dividing power. This is over! In this regard, the bridges that the French pioneers crossed just after the marching of troops from one bank to the other are a beautiful symbol.”

These passages show that the German press’ respect for French authority went beyond deference – it was true thanksgiving.

On the same day Die Rheinpfalz announced de Gaulle’s visit, they featured an article titled “France’s War Damage and Losses.” This article showed another dynamic critical to understanding Franco-German reconciliation after World War II: they had both felt the pains of defeat, France first by Germany and then Germany by the Allies. While the French were indeed one of the Allies, the Germans under occupation identified with their previous rivals because they were likewise rebuilding a war-torn country, unlike the British to a large degree, and certainly unlike the Americans. According to Die Rheinpfalz, French war damages totaled 40.7 billion francs in the agricultural sector, 41.8 billion in industry, 96.5 billion in transportation and infrastructure, and 249.6 billion in private and public structures (i.e. buildings), not to mention their damages in colonial holdings. On top of being able to identify with France because of extensive damages,

84 These amounts are difficult to translate into more meaningful values because the US dollar is the currency of most economic histories of France before and after World War
one can see in the language of this article how the German explanation for their present state came from the idea that the war was its own destructive force – akin to a natural disaster.

The introduction to the article briefly outlined the war as it occurred on French soil, and how they arrived at their present state. While acknowledging the role the Third Reich played in the story, the author contends that the retreat of the German army and Allied bombing campaigns brought a second wave of devastation. The author writes, “The destruction wrought in France is of numerous origins; it was bred through military operations and their outcomes, destruction through the occupation armies, through the Allied air attacks and through interventions by internal French forces” [emphasis in original].

This article demonstrates that German society felt that it had been devastated by World War II of its own volition, rather than by the nations fighting it. By divorcing the war from its combatants, the French became victims of the same conflict, bridging the gap between the two peoples. This apocalyptic imagery was common in the press, and it was compatible with the central component of the press’ ideology – the Christian narrative. By imagining the Second World War as armageddon, Germans could believe they had made a break with the Nazi past and that Europe was fundamentally renewed.

Reconciliation with the French in 1945, therefore, was colored by religious undertones. While the press sought to include all vantage points, there was an overwhelming presence of spirituality in many opinion pieces and columns. Indeed, the

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II. Since Die Rheinpfalz took the space to enumerate these amounts, however, it is reasonable to expect that they were substantial at the time.

85 Based on the chronological nature of this list, we will assume that “occupation armies” refers to the Wehrmacht rather than the Allies since it comes before “Allied air attacks,” though this passage is admittedly slightly ambiguous.
validity of Christian ideas was unquestioned by these newspapers; they seemed to be self-evident truths – a characteristic of religious ideology. The range of this spiritual dynamic in the first year of postwar Germany is the focus of the following section.

2.2. Spirituality in the Press, 1945-1946

Discussions about recent German history took a pseudohistorical turn in public discourse in 1945, meaning that religious, philosophical, and metaphysical rhetoric colored historical narratives. Put differently, Germans were faced not only with articles that offered a political history, but many which judged the horrors of the Nazi regime by Christian morality and placed in a Biblical context. Theology and scholarly philosophy were momentarily united, and the press asserted that Germans must be grounded in spiritual and secular truths in order to avoid repeating the horrors of the Nazi era. These discussions often reflected a belief in spiritual rebirth with overt allusions to the narrative of Christmas; as was humanity in the story of Jesus Christ, Germany would be saved in the first peacetime Christmas after World War II. This pseudohistorical parallel to Christmas, as well as New Year’s, will be referred to as the ‘spiritual Stunde Null.’ The articles presented below come from the first two years of publication, from fall 1945 until roughly mid-1947 – the years during which religious culture was more important to Germans than political ideology.

In considering spiritual and philosophically-centered articles printed in Die Rheinpfalz, Das Schwäbische Tagblatt and Die Freiburger Nachrichten, a few themes will be addressed. First, recasting German history in a religious light had political consequences; in the French Occupation Zone, the popularity of the Christian Democratic
Union was not due solely to its stance toward German war crimes. The solace that came with understanding one’s place in history in the Christian framework was comforting to a population on the edge of the “abyss” and, as a result, the CDU as the most religiously-affiliated party was more appealing.\textsuperscript{86} Second, the cataclysm of World War II in Germany was interpreted in metaphysical terms. Living in the rubble, Germans sought spiritual solutions to their current state, which had parallels to secular and philosophical ideas. Finally, with the discrediting of Nazism, many aspects of German identity such as patriotism were tainted as well, and Christianity became the most important pillar of the nation. With no end to reconstruction in sight, hope for the future was forged in an already existing narrative – the story of Christ.

The references to Christianity were not without influence on Franco-German rapprochement. Indeed, the very embracing of a world religion upheld internationalism rather than National Socialism. In this way, embracing the French as Christians rather than political enemies arose from a shared religious culture as well as a shared experience of destruction in the war. In the preceding years, Vichy France had already seen the utility in cultural unity with their neighbors, as they repeatedly sought to become more equal partners in their collaboration with the Nazi regime; the Germans, on the other hand, did not reciprocate the olive branch and remained suspicious of their new allies, content with their partial military occupation of France and reaping as many benefits as possible.\textsuperscript{87} After the war ended, this relationship reversed. With the balance of power in

Europe as a whole drastically altered, Germans came to see the benefits of a relationship with the French – perhaps solely out of selfish opportunism or also, as this evidence suggests, out of a new worldview as well. The following traces the emergence of this religious paradigm and how it paralleled philosophical debates in the community.

Editorial staffs understood Germans’ dire circumstances not only in material terms, but also psychological. Religious rhetoric was employed to explain why Nazism had been wrong and how they could now reverse their previous trajectory. An article printed in the first edition of Die Rheinpfalz, titled “The spiritual situation of our time,” attempted to recast Germany’s past and present in spiritual terms. Kronenberger wrote:

At the ground level of cultural life, more than in any other domain, the image of mankind must be rediscovered, rather than found, as man is made in the image of God, the image of the created, who know and feel themselves to be a creation. All errors and philosophical tenets of the last decade and their grandiose – unearthly grandiose – intensifications are completely broken in the unspiritual system of Nazism, visibly broken in the course of the war. The horror is, however, that many do not recognize or don’t want to recognize (which is much worse). They live in the realm of the day before yesterday. And yet, seen plainly and soberly: It is the abyss. [Emphasis in original]

This description of Nazism as a spiritual abyss would make more appearances in the local press, and by other writers in addition to Kronenberger. Writers of Die Rheinpfalz repeatedly referenced a resurgence of spirituality in German culture, which sometimes meant Christianity specifically, but other times did not. Kronenberger’s above article is an example of an explicit appeal for Christianity – but other times the lines could be blurred with wordplay. For example, in the above quote, the word ‘Geist’ is translated as

89 Ibid.
‘spirit,’ but it carried religious and philosophical connotations. Kronenberger argued that Nazism was unspiritual in a broader philosophical sense, and therefore a sin in the eyes of God, in whose image Germans needed to reinvent themselves by returning to spiritual life; the Nazis had erred by failing to realize their spiritual plight. This idea paralleled elements of Christian doctrine – specifically, those who do not accept God as lord and savior will go to hell. The sharp contrast between the abyss and salvation was a dichotomy similar to that of Stunde Null; Nazism was the darkness, but Germans could rejoice that they had been saved.

The Freiburger Nachrichten (and eventually the Badische Zeitung) was less religiously shaded than the other two newspapers in this research. Its articles were, in general, more political and less religious, but there were occasional appeals to Christianity – especially in the early days of publication. Dr. Rupert Gießler wrote on 5 September 1945, in a manner similar to the previously discussed article in the Tagblatt:

The most deeply guilty are those who stood behind all the misdeeds and political doings of the [Nazi] regime, as preached by Adolf Hitler and his party … [with] the hubris, by which they believed that they themselves could dare the world and God… Such a self-definition makes it clear that the retreat from a Christian spirit, that once blessed the occident and took our Volk to great deeds, is the deepest reason for the catastrophe.\[^{91}\]

The contrast drawn between Christianity and Nazism, and between God and Hitler, was again emphasized. National Socialism’s implicit retreat from Christianity had been the root cause of Germans’ suffering as well as the suffering they inflicted. Although this piety would not linger in the Freiburger Nachrichten and Badische Zeitung, such religious interpretations were certainly present in the earliest editions.

Though the attempt by various clergy to serve as an intermediary between the occupation administration and the defeated Germans was not immediately welcomed by the French, the Church became influential in the French Zone due most to the prevalence of Catholicism in the region.\textsuperscript{92} In the immediate postwar months, ostensibly Catholic writers in the local press, and even clergy, joined in the press’ effort to reassert the Church in German society. In the first edition of \textit{Die Rheinpfalz}, most of a page was dedicated to article titled “In the hell of Belsen [and] Auschwitz.”\textsuperscript{93} This article discussed the mechanics of the death camps more than the faith of the Nazis who ran them; the title nonetheless conveyed the message that the camps were anti-Christian and unholy.

The next edition featured a full-page article written by a Catholic priest who had been interned at Dachau for five years. With the title “Five years in the hell of Dachau: experiences and insights – reality and facts,” this article criticized the paganism and evil of the Nazi commanders and perpetrators.\textsuperscript{94} This page is striking and, as mentioned in its introduction, “shocking.” The word ‘hell’ is, once again, large and sensational, but this is not the first item to which one’s eyes are drawn. There are three large pictures on the page. One is an external view of a crematorium, another is of a pile of dead bodies, and the last is a close-up of the bodies. The other newspapers also gave graphic details about the horrors of the Holocaust; for example, the \textit{Freiburger Nachrichten} made reference to the “mountains of corpses… living skeletons all packed together in the living quarters in such a way that they as a result of their great numbers could not lie down and perished

like gnats.”\textsuperscript{95} The photos from Die Rheinpfalz will be reproduced below to better convey how striking they are.

![Figure 1. Photo of corpses](image1)

![Figure 2. Close-up of corpses](image2)

The captions of these photos read “This was their gruesome work,” and “They no longer knew the dignity of the human face,” respectively. There are two important

\textsuperscript{95}“Der Lüneberger Prozeß,” Freiburger Nachrichten, September 21, 1945, p. 2.
linguistic aspects of these captions to point out. First, the word ‘Antlitz,’ meaning face or countenance, has a religious connotation since it is used in the context of Christian imagery. ‘Heiliges Antlitz’ (Holy Face) refers to the image of Christ. Second, in the first caption, the lower case ‘i’ in ‘ihr’ indicates that the clergy was referring to Nazi perpetrators as ‘they’, as opposed to formal ‘you’ or ‘you all’ with ‘Ihr.’ To be certain, the article was most directly referring to a death camp with a concrete set of perpetrators – being those who worked in Auschwitz itself. What does this tell us about the clergy’s views of German guilt? One interpretation of this article is that the Church saw the crimes of the Nazi era as having been committed by a group of perpetrators, not the collective. Would Germans have followed suit if the Church had endorsed collective guilt rather than ignoring it? While this counterfactual is unanswerable, it is clear that the debate over Catholic anti-Semitism occurring in some circles of the Church was not being replicated for the consumption of the common German.

“Five years in the hell of Dachau” asserted that Catholics were likewise victims in the Holocaust. This was clear in statements such as, “From 1940-45, 2,500 Roman Catholic priests and 40 protestant preachers were in Dachau [Emphasis in original].”96 The first detail that was omitted in this was that the Nazis did not target priests for their Christian faith, but being activists or ‘undesirables’ in other respects.97 Additionally, this quote implies that Protestants had been more complicit in Nazism, since fewer had been put in Dachau; Protestantism was therefore less suitable for postwar Germans than

97 The only Christians to face persecution in the Holocaust primarily for integral aspects their faith were Jehovah’s Witnesses, whose pacifism contradicted Nazism. See Gellately, Backing Hitler, p. 75.
Catholicism. While this claim should be understood as a blatant political smear, such
slandering was rare; the focus was more on the horrors of Auschwitz than the churches’
complicity. Above all, this article characterized Nazism as pagan and, therefore, anti-
Christian, as shown in statements such as, “The paganism revealed itself in the brutal
rape of the most primal human rights, those of freedom and life. [Emphasis in
original]”\textsuperscript{98} By establishing the dichotomy between paganism and the Church, and
between respecting and violating human rights, the writer implied that Catholicism had
been anti-Nazi during the Holocaust. This manipulation of the tenets of Nazism and
antithetical logic was also the basis for other groups, such as the Soviet Union and
eventually the Social Unity Party (SED) of East Germany, to claim they had been anti-
fascist by definition – and therefore in practice.\textsuperscript{99}

Christianity was not always the press’ answer to how Germans could alter their
national trajectory. While writers like \textit{Die Rheinpfalz’s} Kronenberger frequently wrote
about the virtues of spirituality, many argued otherwise. Numerous articles in 1945 and
1946 advocated a return to an ideology more in line with metaphysical principles. For
instance, in “The spiritual situation of our time” even Kronenberger noted:

> Order is \textit{wholeness}, order is what Goethe saw in the sphere. And ascension in the
cultural sense does not mean anything other than ascension to this wholeness,
ascension from the flatness of being leveled off (what Nazism wanted), in the real
freedom of the soul, in the order of the thing, in the circle of the great
relationships. [Emphasis in original]\textsuperscript{100}

Kronenberger saw a need for Germans to be multidimensional, or in other words to
balance secular ideology with spirituality. German eighteenth and early-nineteenth

\textsuperscript{98} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{99} Herf, \textit{Divided Memory}, pp. 69-105.
\textsuperscript{100} Kronenberger, “Die geistige Lage unserer Zeit,” p. 3.
century philosophy was the cultural-historical point to which they could return, before the inexorable march toward Nazism.

German philosophy was regularly discussed, and often related to Christian ideas. For instance, the writings of Catholic philosopher Saint Thomas Aquinas were employed to emphasize spirituality in German life. An article, titled “Synthesis of God and World”\textsuperscript{101} reported on a conference at an unspecified philosophical-theological college in Mainz celebrating the life and ideas of Aquinas. This article reflects not only a message espoused by the newspaper, but the discussion of such ideas in the community. The faculty at the Mainz school (most likely one of the colleges later incorporated into the Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz) spoke to a standing-room-only crowd on 7 March 1946 about the abyss of Nazism. The path had been lost when the “heresies” of nineteenth century materialist philosophy, from figures such as Friedrich Nietzsche and Charles Darwin, came to dominate German ideology. The faculty concluded, according to \textit{Die Rheinpfalz}, that recent events had demonstrated that the spirit of Aquinas and his lessons must return to Germany, and urged a ‘synthesis of God and world.’

It is not explicit if the writers of the article, and in turn the faculty, directly advocated a ‘return’ to Catholicism. Aquinas was, indeed, an important Catholic thinker, but his epistemological theories spoke, most basically, to the inability for mankind to comprehend its own existence vis-à-vis a higher power.\textsuperscript{102} The Catholic Church, then, was to be an intermediary that allowed God and mankind to be in communication with each other. The idea that mankind cannot comprehend its existence is by itself merely a

philosophical principle, not necessarily religious; Aquinas, the faculty, and the reporter from Die Rheinpfalz did, however, seem to agree that the Church was the answer to this existential conundrum.

The newspapers featured regular short essays and serials written by contemporary or past literary figures. These had clear political objectives and, in the case of historical figures, were relevant to the problems of the present. One such example comes from the Badische Zeitung in an essay by Adalbert Stifter, a nineteenth century Austrian writer and artist:

I believe there is no other sickness of the time than ignorance and dishonesty, and that all evil, which in the most recent past has haunted the world, has come from these two things alone... No Weltgeist, no demons rule the world: everything good or evil that befalls people, the people have done themselves. God gave them free will and reason and put their fate in their own hands.\textsuperscript{103}

The first sentence implied that the German people had been duped by the Nazis, but also that the suffering of the nation was self-inflicted due to personal error rather than external enemies. This excerpt highlights various German philosophical ideas – which, as it was believed, had led to Nazism – that the local press was interested in denouncing in the occupation period. Printing Stifter in the newspaper was also symbolic: the fact that these words came from the pen of a German-speaking writer, and one who had died in the late nineteenth century, made them all the more powerful because they represented an anti-fascist aspect of German history.

The Freiburger Nachrichten emphasized religion and philosophy less frequently than any other newspaper presented in this thesis; that this editorial staff was ‘less

\textsuperscript{103} Adalbert Stifter, “Krankheit der Zeit,” printed in Die Badische Zeitung, March 15, 1946, p. 5.
Christian’ than their regional counterparts corresponded to their deemphasizing of spirituality in general. However, the Nachrichten did sometimes circulate philosophical ideas in the early postwar years; such articles drew a noteworthy distinction with the other newspapers. The following article reported on a lecture series at the University of Freiburg by Catholic philosopher Dr. Max Müller. In discussing “Man in philosophy since Pascal,” Müller outlined philosophical trends since the Renaissance, and concluded, similarly to Die Rheinpfalz in “A Synthesis of God and World,” that mankind is not self-actualizing, but must remain in contact with the creator. Müller concluded:

From this exciting path through the crises of the modern era, the image of humanity [Menschenbild] brings the presenter [Müller] to this purpose: to strive for the philosophy of the person, of the spiritual person who is not only a spiritual person, but is rather a concretely, historical person: synthesis between historicity and ahistoricity; between eternity and historical temporality; between spirit and passion, passion that is love. Eros opened the horizon and thus leads to objectivity.  

These ideas bore striking resemblance to articles in the other newspapers. Without spirituality Germans would not be enlightened – another misstep of the Nazi era. It is significant that these lecture series seem to have been common; these newspapers suggest that philosophical discussions were a regular occurrence at German universities. While the writings of some national figures, like Karl Jaspers, concerning the postwar German psyche are well known to academics today, the commoner in 1945 experienced these ideas through the filters of university lectures and the local press.

It is surprising that these newspapers attempted to represent scholarly philosophy, even if this is commonplace in national press agencies catering to a more intellectual

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104 Max Müller, “Der Mensch in der Philosophie seit Pascal,” Freiburger Nachrichten, October 30, 1945, p. 5.
readership. One reason to avoid such complex topics is that complex and detailed philosophical treatises can hardly be explained to a mixed audience in the length and format of a newspaper article; the purpose of these, then, must have been to write an accessible version of this philosophy. In articles such as the aforementioned, journalists introduced only a few philosophical terms and explained their pertinence to German society. By doing so, these newspapers were fulfilling their self-proclaimed role as an impartial educator and spiritual leader of postwar Germany, as discussed in the first section. Therefore, the ideas of figures such as Karl Jaspers and Günter Grass were controlled by the press, manipulated to reflect the editorial staffs’ ideals. This research suggests that, since these non-partisan newspapers espoused many of the same ideas, this represented a social consensus in French-occupied Germany. Without political affiliations, these newspapers sought to rehabilitate the German nation spiritually.

*Stunde Null*, or ‘zero hour,’ has largely been understood as a political and ideological phenomenon in German History. This thesis does not dispute the presence of many former Nazis in German institutions after 1945, but instead considers the cultural implications of *Stunde Null*. The calls of leading figures in Western society after World War II for a radical adjustment to German culture and a corresponding parliamentary democracy still impact the country. Debates over *Stunde Null* have centered on whether Germans made a clean break with the Nazi past after the downfall of the Hitler regime. Was the postwar period marked more predominantly by changes or continuities? Additionally, even if there were great changes made to the fabric of German society, do they excuse the atrocities of World War II in any way? These questions have remained

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105 See pp. 34-36.
central to *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* in the years following the war; regardless of the answers, however, most histories of Germany justifiably use 1945 as a turning point.

The churches’ complicity in the Holocaust is now generally accepted, but this confrontation was a process that took decades. Immediately after the war, the churches were largely quiet on the issue of their own guilt – minus the activities of a few clergy who had actively opposed the Nazis. Their efforts to change Christian doctrine were largely internal, and their voices only heard by their colleagues.¹⁰⁶ In 1945, Catholic clergy claimed a victim status – even though many of them had done nothing to address the misapplication of Christian principles in justifying the murderous aims of the Third Reich. Even though there was no *Stunde Null* for the churches as institutions, local German newspapers in the French Occupation Zone show that there was indeed a Christian rebirth that constituted a break with the past.

That the spiritual *Stunde Null* was predicated on the false innocence of the churches was not admitted or discussed by Germans at the time. The myth of a *Kirchenkampf* between the Nazi government and the churches permeated in the German psyche after the war due to both their expectation of a morally pure church and the reinforcement of this perception in sermons and local newspapers. Additionally, the pardoning of many clergy in Allied tribunals confirmed the churches’ innocence to the German population. Since it was believed the priests and bishops did not perpetrate or

¹⁰⁶ A noteworthy exception to this rule is in an article in the *Schwäbisches Tagblatt* in which the newspaper covered a speech given by Martin Niemöller in Stuttgart. See “Pastor Niemöller zur Schuldfrage,” *Schwäbisches Tagblatt* (12 April 1946), p. 2. This article prints explicit support of *Kollektivschuld* – not only for the German *Volk* but the Pastor as well. While this conflicts with the message of the innocent church suggested in this section, it upholds this essay’s general conclusion, that the newspapers were interested in presenting every opinion and minimizing the effects of censorship.
abet the Holocaust, Christianity remained a moral high ground to which Germans sought a return – they just needed to readjust the story of their recent past to transform Hitler from the second coming into the spawn of the devil. Though this meant a new religious narrative, the churches and Christianity remained untouched – while German society took full responsibility for the Nazi regime.

2.3 Christmas and New Year’s as Turning Points

As 1945 dragged on, the suffering of the war seemed to be extending indefinitely. Though there was a necessary political and ideological turning point in May with the capitulation of the Nazi regime, the lives of most Germans had not improved by autumn. Poverty, hunger and disease were rampant as unprepared and understaffed public health crews fought to keep the defeated Germans alive – a difficulty they had not foreseen. Under these conditions, the resurgence of traditional and anti-fascist Christianity found a German population open to its ideas, seeking salvation for an aggressive war which they could not blame on others. In the days before Christmas, journalists employed the narrative of the birth of Jesus Christ to explain the plight of modern Germans, inventing a spiritual Wendepunkt. It was believed that the German people had sinned by putting their faith in the Nazi regime, and on Christmas Eve night, their souls would be cleansed.

The ‘rebirth’ of Germans in Christmas 1945 was politically advantageous for conservative Catholics in the French Occupation Zone. Their status in Germany was cemented in this spiritual Stunde Null, and nearly every district in the zone voted in support of the Christian Democratic Union in local and national elections from 1946 to

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107 See Reinisch, *The Perils of Peace*. 
1949, and beyond. Beyond political outcomes, however, we can draw greater conclusions about the religiosity of Germans before and after 1945. The assumption that Germans who perpetrated the Holocaust had ignored their Christianity, or perhaps were not Christians at all, is questionable. Some historians have challenged this myth, showing how and why Germans justified the persecution of the Jews and other undesirables in accordance with their religious beliefs. This study of a spiritual *Stunde Null* shows that religion remained so important to Germans after World War II that they readjusted the Christian narrative to account for the crimes of Nazism.

If Germans manipulated their memory of Christianity after the Nazi regime, it is likely a similar process occurred in the 1930s as Nazism was put into practice. This indicates, above all, that Christianity, not politics, was the core of their identity as remembered after the war. Despite many Nazi ideologues’ intentions of a new atheistic, political world order, Germans had to reconcile fascism with the story of Christianity. The Reich Concordat with the Catholic Church in 1933 had been interpreted as Hitler seeking the approval of the Pope by those who wanted to believe it (though the Führer had vastly different motives for concluding this agreement than squaring his politic ideas with religious truths). Since Hitler was unsure if he could completely eradicate the church from German society, there were fewer signs of anti-Christian actions around which resistance to Nazism could form than his appointment to chancellor seemed to have promised. In fact, the *Kirchenkampf* [church struggle] has been characterized since World
War II as more of an interdenominational power struggle as the political landscape shifted drastically from Imperial Germany to Weimar to the Nazi Regime.  

_Stunde Null_ has been a powerful political tool since 1945, yet the implementation of a liberal democratic system in West Germany in 1949 can only partially answer the question many would ask a generation after the Nazis’ horrors: how did they live with themselves after the world finally grasped the full scope of the Holocaust? Fleeing to the church and seeking salvation could largely explain this rehabilitation. The invention of a religious _Stunde Null_ on 25 December, 1945 was a grassroots revolution documented in local newspapers. While the political and intellectual elites repaired the broken German political system in the late 1940s, local journalists and religious leaders opened a door to salvation through which Germans could walk.

The spiritual _Stunde Null_ is evident in all three of the newspapers at hand, but is the most obvious in _Die Rheinpfalz_ during Edmund Kronenberger’s tenure as chief editor – from the newspaper’s beginnings until mid-1946. In “Christmas, 1945,” Kronenberger wrote that the “Holy Night” of Christmas Eve was a time when the world could put the troubles of the past to rest and embrace the peace and salvation of the future. He wrote that “all mankind stands in the intersection between light and dark, between reality and lies, between death and life.”  

In this narrative, Christmas Eve night was the religious equivalent of _Stunde Null_ and the buffer between sin and salvation, as in the story of the New Testament. Kronenberger wrote further, “And when we enter the holy night of Christmas, then all mysteries will be solved, and all bitterness and agony taken away –

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108 Ericksen, _Complicity in the Holocaust_, p. 95.
not in an external sense, to be sure, not in the visibility of our life, but on a level of
deep and greater reality, on the innermost level of the spiritual man. [Emphasis in
original]”\textsuperscript{110} This excerpt demonstrates how Stunde Null pervaded German society and
how much it drew from the Christian tradition. Christmas Eve was the equivalent of the
night before the birth of Christ. The washing away of the sins of mankind in a great,
historic moment parallels the German belief in Stunde Null.

Although the religious beliefs of Kronenberger were more obvious than the
editors of the other two newspapers, the spiritual Stunde Null was nonetheless universal.
Dr. Josef Forderer, editor of the Schwäbisches Tagblatt held similar beliefs; in his article
“Peace on Earth,” written in the days before Christmas 1945, Forderer made connections
between the postwar environment and the Christian narrative.\textsuperscript{111} The first bridge between
these two worlds was in the title, which carried both political and religious connotations.
On the one hand, it referred to peace after World War II – the cessation of formally
declared war. On the other hand, Forderer was alluding to a greater peace in mankind and
to averting future conflicts by quoting the Bible: “Glory to God in the highest, and on
earth peace, good will toward men.”\textsuperscript{112} The juxtaposition of these two concepts further
reflects the melding of God and world in the German mindset.

Forderer moved beyond abstract connections in the body of the article to describe
Germans’ spiritual situation and provide a roadmap to salvation. He wrote, “Everyone
knows and feels it: a new era prepares itself, and only it can protect us from further
decline. A complete spiritual transformation is necessary against the thinking of the last

\textsuperscript{110} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{111} Josef Forderer, “Friede auf Erden,” Schwäbisches Tagblatt, 21 December, 1945, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{112} Luke 2:14, King James Bible.
twelve years… [We need] The revival of a religious lifestyle in Christianity that always strived to overcome darkness, suffering and evil.”\textsuperscript{113} This piece encouraged a return to Christianity and warned against a relapse to the secular worldview of the Nazis. The above quote also shows that the transformations in May 1945 with the political \textit{Stunde Null} did not complete the “spiritual transformation.” The upcoming Christian holiday, therefore, was a symbolic turning point for German society, essential for their reentry into the West as well as the Kingdom of God.

One of the \textit{Freiburger Nachrichten’s} Christmas articles was titled “A Call to Peace and Humanity: Political Thoughts on Christmas.”\textsuperscript{114} As we saw with the aforementioned articles, the connection between politics and religion was clear in the title. Gießler saw religion as a way to achieve a crucial political settlement – peace on earth. One could argue that this dream of a utopia draws on revolutionary political ideologies of the previous fifty years by seeking a break with human nature; in this sense Nazi ideology continued in the postwar environment. However, the most fundamental aspect of the spiritual \textit{Stunde Null} was the call for brotherly love, equality and pacifism, characteristics which cannot be said of Nazism.

In “A Call to Humanity,” Dr. Gießler wrote about the importance of radically altering German culture. One key to this was to embrace Christianity – a collective salvation was to occur with the coming of Christmas 1945. He wrote, “Christmas is an appeal to the overcoming of the indolence of the heart. Let us follow the call and let us

\textsuperscript{113} Ibid.
embark on the path to a new humanity!”\textsuperscript{115} Dr. Gießler differed slightly from the previously mentioned articles by making an implication about the ‘calling’ of Christianity in connection with cultural rebirth. According to his interpretation of Christmas, the German people had more of a responsibility to come to Christianity, whereas Kronenberger and Johann described a more passive salvation that occurs to ‘good Germans’ – similar to the Christian prediction of judgment day.

Another integral aspect of achieving the enlightenment, Dr. Gießler wrote, was the embracing of Western tradition. Though he does not explicitly name the French example, a line is clearly drawn between Baden and the East. The cultural superiority of the West is enunciated and connected to religious salvation in this paragraph:

\begin{quote}
We live in our Baden countryside – and we should also think on this rather than complain – still in happy relationships as opposed to those who are still on the tramp in winter’s cold in the East. On this we have more of a charge to help, to give and to sacrifice wherever we encounter need. The days of Christmas should be a reminder to us – on these days we can do some good for homelessness and solitude. It should be a beginning of the return to humanity and goodness, to the true cultural activity of the heart, and with it political education as well. Then will the message of Christmas, that arises on the entire perimeter of human life, be fruitful for us in the political realm as well.\textsuperscript{116}
\end{quote}

The first important aspect of this excerpt is the praise for the French and the denouncing of the East, depicting its purgatorial existence as the winter. This linkage between metaphorical winter and actual climate differences further delineated the French Zone from the Soviet Zone, and eastward to the USSR itself. The phrase ‘auf der Wanderschaft’ is translated as ‘on the tramp’ and refers to a time of education on the road to enlightenment. In addition to being grounded in German mythology, as well as being a

\textsuperscript{115} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{116} Gießler, “Der Ruf,” p. 1.
literary trope, the phrase is used in the context of the journeyman years for handworkers, during which they travel from town to town on foot working as apprentices. Therefore, as with the idea of Christian salvation, the East was still in the darkness of their search for the path to righteousness.

Gießler’s reference to the cultural greatness of Baden is logical since Freiburg was one of the major cities in the area, but this likely had a more important connotation. Baden was split between the French and American Occupation Zones when the Allies drew up the zonal borders in 1945. Since the northern section of Baden lay in the American Zone, Gießler was commenting on the superiority of Western culture – transcending zonal borders – in its ability to return to Christianity. The atheism of the Soviet Union was backwards in the eyes of the predominantly Catholic population in the French Zone. Therefore, in the days before the dawn of the Cold War, and even with steady calls for world peace emanating from these very newspapers, some were already seeing communism as inherently flawed because of its relationship with Christianity. The merging of politics and religion in this article indicates a German return to spirituality from the secularity of the Nazi era – a spiritual *Stunde Null*.

The sociopolitical crisis of postwar Germany was not the only secular idea to which the narrative of Christmas was paralleled in the spiritual *Stunde Null*. After Christmas 1945, these journalists spoke of New Year’s Eve holiday in similar terms, referring to new eras and the rebirth of the German nation in distinctly spiritual and metaphysical language. Regardless of religious affiliation, New Year’s Day represented a turning of the calendar universal to the West; it is a secular and universal turning point. By associating the spiritual *Stunde Null* with a holiday universally shared in Germany
regardless of religious beliefs, Germans further interconnected worldly realities with religious narratives.

Suggesting that New Year’s holiday added a second phase to the ideas presented in this section begs the question: what happened in the week between Christmas and New Year’s? Did Germans not witness either the upholding or discrediting of their prediction of national renewal? Since these journalists were speaking in metaphysical terms, they did not expect to wake up on 25 December and encounter a physically altered world. Spiritual rebirth was not something that could be measured or observed. References to the German Geist, or soul, were frequent in the early years of these publications, found in articles on topics ranging from war crimes trials to German literature. The press’ silence on the outcome of the spiritual Stunde Null indicates that the leaders of the former National Socialist regime did not find the solace they sought in their self-inflicted spiritual purge.

In the Schwäbisches Tagblatt on 28 December, 1945, an article titled “On the New Year,” written by Professor Dr. Carl Schmid, ostensibly a representative in the Staatsrat, or state council, showed how even a politician in the leftist Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) conceived of spiritual rebirth in the concluding days of 1945:

There is no more urgent task than to arouse our Volk from the deep twilight sleep to a brave awakening, in which fate is otherwise confirmed as so, in which the here and now of existence not experienced as a desperate closure of yesterday, but is rather the door that leads to a tomorrow that we can shape with the images of our hope and will, if we are courageous enough to back away from the brittleness of the subject.\footnote{Carl Schmid, “Zum neuen Jahr,” Das Schwäbische Tagblatt, 28 December, 1945, p. 1.}
The SPD was less likely to allude to religion than the CDU since they were not as closely affiliated with the Catholic Church and Schmid’s article seems, on the one hand, devoid of mentions to Christianity – so how did it reflect the spiritual *Stunde Null*? His references to walking through a ‘door’ and the hope for a new, resurrected ‘tomorrow’ were, in fact, similar to previously mentioned journalists who made more blatant Christian appeals. The convergence of secular and religious themes shows that Germans in this time saw the future of German society similarly: the salvation of the German people would atone for the murderous Nazi past.

German intellectual thought was distinctly Christian in the French Occupation Zone in the early postwar years. Articles that reprinted words of Catholic philosophers like Jacques Maritain, Thomas Aquinas and others, as well as conferences at local universities that explicitly discussed the role of religion in constructing existential truths were indicative of a widespread embrace of Christianity. In addition to the words of ardent Christians, Germans heard from respected secular thinkers and community leaders who came to the same conclusion: Christianity was the gateway to the future. Therefore, one broader conclusion is that the failure of the Nazi system dealt a deathblow to secular ideologies in general; after World War II, Germans trusted only spirituality. As we will see, this distrust in politics was temporary, and the German-German border became the front line of political-ideological warfare in the Cold War.

Did German culture in the FBZ experience *Stunde Null* after May 1945? This chapter asserts that – with the retreat from politics, retelling of the World War II narrative and Franco-German grassroots rapprochement, as reflected in local newspapers – there was. Furthermore, this paradigm shift was conceived of in religious terms. Without a
fundamental adjustment to the narrative of Christianity, it is difficult to gauge how the credibility of the churches would have survived 1945 because of their compliance with the Nazi regime. As Richard Steigmann-Gall has shown, many ardent Nazis – but by no means all – genuinely conceived of their historical mission as compatible with their Christian beliefs.\textsuperscript{118} Christianity continued to play an important role in Germany as a surviving pillar of society in the early postwar years. As we have seen, religious salvation necessitated radically altering how Nazism fit in the Christian narrative – it became an evil rather than the savior of the \textit{Volk}. Over the course of 1945 numerous articles were published in local newspapers all over the French Occupation Zone adapting German history to denounce Nazism and embrace Christianity once more.

The spiritual \textit{Stunde Null} represented a change in postwar Germany from the Nazi era. The widespread electoral victories of the conservative Catholic center party, the CDU, is a tangible example of the return to Christian values. This chapter argues that Christianity had not disappeared during the Nazi era; they had instead been aligned with the regime’s ideas. Unfortunately, we cannot know how the long term reconstruction of Germany would have been accomplished if more ideas from the French Thesis had won out; the Cold War ended this brief lacuna by mobilizing Germans for the ideological Cold War in the East as well as the West. This chapter has addressed the year 1945 and early 1946 as a snapshot of German culture, with a distinct set of ideas. The evolution of these ideas from 1945 until 1947 is the subject of the next chapter.

3. Vergangenheitsbewältigung from 1945-1947

The first phase of ‘coming to terms with the past’ in French Occupation Zone was not limited to the first year after the end of World War II; while the extreme spirituality in the press would soon begin to diminish, only the rise of Cold War tensions would usher in the subsequent era of “collective amnesia.” While the first chapter focused on the early postwar era, from fall 1945 until mid-1946, as a moment in German social history in its own right, this chapter will instead trace the change of a few representative ideas over time. These themes will be examined through newspaper columns, articles that covered current political current events, and responses from the community. It will be shown that the discussion of the past in German society that began after the fall of Nazi Germany continued until the dawn of the Cold War in 1947.

Since the final chapter of this thesis discusses the decline of Vergangenheitsbewältigung as democratic Western capitalism gained centrality in the final two years of occupation, this chapter will instead characterize the FBZ preceding these transitions, asking the following questions: did the press’ effort to keep remembrance at the forefront of German society continue after the first year of publication? Is there evidence that the piety which characterized society in 1945 and early 1946 may have remained a cultural cornerstone without Germans’ immersion in the Cold War paradigm? This evidence indicates that religion continued to be central to Germans’ understanding of the past in the FBZ; how long this would have continued is open to speculation. Without the polarization and politicization of Western society in the Cold War, it is not unimaginable that religion may have played a more integral role in society in some European countries.

119 Fulbrook, German National Identity, p. 50.
Leaving this counterfactual aside, these articles do suggest that a ‘synthesis of God and world’ continued to weigh on the German imagination until at least 1947.120

The first section of this chapter will explore early Franco-German reconciliation by looking at a few main components of the process. First, the press prioritized grassroots, social reconciliation in society in the FBZ over official and diplomatic rapprochement between the two governments – though the latter was certainly not discouraged either, if for no other reason than the eye of French censorship. Spiritual rhetoric from the early months after the fall of the Nazi regime persisted; the Christian narrative continued to be relevant and, indeed, central to Franco-German reconciliation. Second, the press promoted French culture in the FBZ by promoting greater mutual understanding between the two peoples. Finally, a France amenable to friendship with the defeated Germans was depicted in the press; as such, numerous articles made reference to French echoing their calls for reconciliation.

Section two will examine political issues and their depiction in the press developing between 1945 and 1947, as well as the politicization of local newspapers. Initially, the occupation authorities required nonpartisanship for a press license – which meant installing staff from diverse political backgrounds and keeping political campaigning out of the newspaper. However, a gradual relaxation of this requirement is evident in the newspapers, as they were permitted to print articles about the platforms of the respective parties in mid-1946 in anticipation of the first local elections later that fall. Starting in 1947, each party in the FBZ was required to make connections with an established newspaper; as such, theoretically, politics were present only in certain

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newspapers. However, since none of the newspapers in this thesis became official party newspapers, did they remain unbiased? If not, had they remained purely objective before 1947? These questions will be part of the discussion in section two.

The third section traces the discussion of German guilt as it developed over time. Denazification, political purges, and war crimes trials were focal points of this foundational period of German memory culture – all of which were interrelated as part of Allied cultural reeducation, and were “as much about pedagogy as justice.”\textsuperscript{121} Many Germans quickly, however, came to the conclusion that denazification was victor’s justice; they believed the average German was being punished rather than the main offenders.\textsuperscript{122} Paradoxically, however, the scapegoating of the Nazi high command was often accompanied by an acceptance of collective guilt. While these attitudes have justifiably been treated as contradictory by contemporaries and historians since, evidence indicates that a portion of Germans in 1945 – the most religiously zealous, certainly – embraced both notions at once. With the Allies quickly becoming doubtful of their ability to punish even a majority of the Nazi regime’s supporters, much less all, assigning guilt to Germany as a whole had no tangible punishment for the average citizen; Germans therefore looked elsewhere for the meaning of their guilt. The Christian concepts of original sin and ritual sacrifice provided pseudohistorical parallels for their atonement. The final section of this chapter will detail this short-lived but unique paradigm.

\textsuperscript{121} Judt, \textit{Postwar}, p. 53.
\textsuperscript{122} Mark Mazower, \textit{Dark Continent: Europe’s Twentieth Century} (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999), p. 239.
3.1. Franco-German Reconciliation, 1945-1947

The first chapter showed how the cultural upheaval of wartime and postwar destruction affected Franco-German relations at the grassroots level in 1945; the belief in a shared experience in WWII, one of destruction and misery, as well as the recognition that Germans and French needed to embrace each other to avoid future wars, were central in this transition. At least from the German perspective, Christianity united them above their national identities. This section will trace the discussion of Franco-German relations as it developed during the early postwar period, focusing mostly on the period from 1946 until mid-1947, after the ‘shock’ of 1945 had partially worn off. Additional dimensions of the Franco-German relationship to those mentioned in the first chapter will be explored – i.e. the promotion of French culture in the FBZ, the effort by the press to facilitate friendly relations, and the portrayal of a pro-Germany France. Finally, this section will explore the aspects of Franco-German reconciliation that faced reevaluation starting in 1947 with the dawn of the Cold War.

As outlined in the first two chapters, Germans in the FBZ championed reconciliation with their occupiers (and neighbors) as an existential imperative. Put differently, local newspapers often alluded to the Second World War as a near apocalypse for European society (which was a reasonable argument, after all), and that the continent needed to make peace in order to avoid destruction. In this religious paradigm, France and Germany had been destroyed by the same almost spiritual forces: militarism and cultural decay. This perception of mutual suffering did not diminish after the first several months of the press; instead, it remained an important facet of their belief system until the
Cold War dichotomy of West-versus-East made their alliance a natural part of democracy’s struggle against the spread of communism.

An article in the Schwäbisches Tagblatt in May 1945 aptly reflects this belief in Franco-German reconciliation as a cultural imperative. Dr. Rudolf Zimmerle, one of the state prosecutors in war crimes trials, argued in a column “Bridges to France” that making amends with the French people was a “question of fate” (Schicksalsfrage). Furthermore, he argued, the diplomatic rapprochement of the two governments would facilitate this social reconciliation. In his words:

The doubtless existing drawback of an enemy occupation is in complete opposition to the advantage, which awakens an ever closer cooperation between French and German administrative positions and government, which is downright necessary for a good understanding of the other people, enabling a deeper recognition of the foreign mentality and of the achievements of the neighboring peoples.

In other words, Franco-German rapprochement was to trickle down through their administrative positions, and into society itself. Peace between the respective governments would not so simply effect the mending of social relations, however. Zimmerle went on to write, “so long as one cannot yet overcome feelings of hate and revenge found frequently on both sides, a lasting reconciliation [Versöhnung] will certainly not be possible.” The press did not suggest merely, therefore, a ‘top-down’ reconciliation; German society as a whole had to embrace this from the ‘bottom-up’ as well. The local press typically agreed with Zimmerle, as they regularly voiced support for

124 Ibid.
125 Ibid.
Franco-German reconciliation and, more specifically, social interaction between the peoples.

Expressions of French culture became commonplace in the FBZ during the occupation period as part of reeducation initiatives; this somewhat paternalistic dynamic in their relationship was often evident in the press. Commander Koenig visited the University of Freiburg in August 1946, making connections between French and German universities and speaking on what his country had to offer.126 Koenig alluded to the Sorbonne as a parallel “guardian and servant of intellect [Geist] and reality” and expressed that he “sincerely looked forward to finally getting to know the old University of Freiburg more closely.”127 The aspects of German culture that needed to be reinforced, such as spirituality and intellectual learning – as opposed to the largely anti-intellectual strands of Nazi thought – seemingly found a partner in French culture.

The alliance of these universities indicates that the trickling down of Franco-German rapprochement from the administrative level pervaded both ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture in the FBZ – German academia and the local press, respectively. However, after World War II neither German academics nor the press were innocent of having supported Nazism with their words, as Steven Remy and Peter Köpf have pointed out.128 Moreover, the pervasion of former Vichyites in administrative capacities after de Gaulle’s bid for power in 1944 makes this paternalistic relationship of the guilty and (supposedly) innocent even more questionable. Therefore, all parties were motivated to accept this

127 Ibid.
relationship and narrative for the past in order to pardon French collaborationists as well as provide Germans with a way forward; while this might have been a reason ‘why’ the press were so pro-French culture, ‘how’ these manipulations of memory were rationalized was founded more in spirituality and the idea of cultural rebirth.

French occupation officials saw schools and universities as essential to German cultural reeducation. Concerned about the future of the former Hitler Youth, the German public as well as the French occupiers took steps to alter their Weltanschauung (worldview) in more parts of society than merely the press.\textsuperscript{129} The French focus on education meant a wave of new textbooks, teachers, as well as academic collaboration between institutions in the FBZ and their domestic counterparts. One such example of academic collaboration was a colloquium for school children, a regular occurrence in the French Zone.\textsuperscript{130} In other instances, special events or programs brought the two nations’ youths together. The article “French and German” reported on an international competition in French and German schools, in which students wrote essays in the opposite language.\textsuperscript{131} The purpose of the conference was “that the German youth have learned from the past, and from the mutual understanding of language that cultural understanding should grow, which alone ensures the future of Europe and the necessary good relations between Germans and French.”\textsuperscript{132} This article argued firstly that grassroots reconciliation of French and Germans, even amongst schoolchildren, was essential to


\textsuperscript{132} Ibid.
their national rapprochement. Second, Franco-German reconciliation was needed for the survival of Europe as a whole.

The Allies’ propaganda campaign to expose Germans to the carnage of World War II and the Holocaust with film reel is well known; however, the French reeducation campaign intended to do more to ‘correct’ German values, but to spread their own culture as well, especially with films. From mid-1946 to mid-1947, traces of the impact of French films can be found in local newspapers. Such articles did not make it clear whether the films were shown by French administrators or by reopened German-owned cinemas; this ambiguity took the form of, for example, the passive voice in phrases such as “The previous weeks have brought us yet another series of creations by the French film industry… [Emphasis added]” Since French reeducation had numerous other cultural undertakings in the FBZ – such as “concerts, art exhibitions and lectures” – it is likely these screenings were, in fact, sponsored by occupation authorities.

Other sources apart from the press suggest that the appreciation for French films expressed in the newspapers was a basically accurate representation of German public opinion in the FBZ; American Percy Bidwell reported in Foreign Affairs in 1948, “As far as I could judge, the German population in the French Zone is highly appreciative of the

133 Though the word propaganda can have a negative connotation, implying false or exaggerated claims, this is not intended here. This use of ‘propaganda’ simply refers to Allied reeducation in Germany after World War II.
French cultural program.” One way to interpret this phenomenon is that with the hardships of daily life, Germans welcomed French distractions at the cinemas – not least because German films in the postwar era were often of the genre *Trümmerfilme*, or ‘rubble films,’ which used destroyed German landscapes as the backdrop for exploring contemporary – and somber – issues.

It is clear from the evidence above that there was much interaction between French occupation administration and German cultural, political, and intellectual institutions. While the press certainly encouraged local populations to embrace this influx of French culture to facilitate cooperation with the occupiers, what evidence do we have to evaluate the effectiveness of their entreaties for friendship? The purpose of this thesis is not to suggest that F. Roy Willis’ characterization of the tension (especially at first) between French and Germans was wholly incorrect; indeed, reading between the lines of local newspapers gives us clues as to how many locals felt about the French. Instead, initial hostility cohabited the German psyche with true hopes for peace, the latter of which becoming more predominant as years progressed after 1945.

An article in *Die Rheinpfalz* in January 1947 attempted to correct some of the negative stereotypes about the French that were common in German society before and during the occupation period. “What are the French like?” details the tense relations between French and Germans, stating that, for instance, “Not few [French] go to a French [local] office rather than a German because they will be treated more politely there.” On the one hand, the two peoples certainly would have regarded each other with a degree

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137 Ibid.
of resentment and distrust but, on the other hand, Germans seemed to appreciate some of the French administration’s initiatives – such as the films previously discussed. This attitude basically corresponded to Germans’ “deeply ambivalent” views of the American administration in its zone, which indeed bore the blessing and curse of being the most powerful occupier of the three western Zones (and arguably of all four). The majority of society in the Soviet Zone, on the other hand, held negative views of the occupiers, thanks mostly to mass rape and economic disarmament during and after the invasion. Though they succeeded in winning over much of the intelligentsia, the Soviets failed to attract as much support from German workers, average citizens, and even communists as the SED would subsequently claim.

*Die Rheinpfalz* saw Franco-German reconciliation, i.e. the peace between the peoples of both countries, equally as important as official rapprochement. The abovementioned article went on from its depiction of negativity in everyday social interaction to encourage Germans to argue that the French people were separate from their government and other national institutions. Hellmut Holthaus wrote:

> It shouldn’t read: The French want…, instead: The French government intends… Not: the French write…, instead: the French newspaper “Figaro” writes…, not: the French are…, instead: Monsieur Duval of Nantes is… Not: the French have mistreated me, instead: some people in Marseille were bad to me (which can certainly happen). Not: the French want to marry German women, instead: Monsieur Boulanger proposed to me.

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142 Ibid.
The above quote shows that the press not only sought to facilitate Franco-German reconciliation by denouncing stereotypes of the French, but also that it valued this above respect for the French authorities. Furthermore, Hollhaus argued, “The countless personal interactions between Germans and French in this zone could contribute to planting understanding and justice in the place of prejudice.” As such, the occupation itself was seen as more than just surveilling the defeated Germans, but rather a process by which the two countries could come to terms with one another.

Some aspects of the above article raise additional questions. Most significantly, the sentence “[not:] The French want…, instead: The French government intends” contradicts the accepted notion that the FBZ had the “most rigorous” press censorship of the four zones.\textsuperscript{143} It seems the French authorities would have encouraged the press to promote better relations between the German population and their occupiers, so the idea that a censor read and approved such an article seems questionable. Why would the censors allow \textit{Die Rheinpfalz} to promote blaming the French government for anything at all? If the press censors in the FBZ were indeed “lax,” as in Köpf’s argument, occasional but intentional oversights may have been outlets for Vichyites and Alsatians disapproving of de Gaulle and the Fourth Republic.\textsuperscript{144} Indeed, as Schözel argues, Laffon’s insistence on allowing Germans to establish a free press seems to have actually superseded the desire by some French administrators to heavily censor German newspapers.

Finally, the press often alluded to reciprocal French pleas for peace in order to facilitate Franco-German reconciliation. Their claims that French opinion favored the

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{143} Eschenburg, \textit{Jahre der Besatzung}, 95.
  \item \textsuperscript{144} Köpf, \textit{Schreiben nach jeder Richtung}, p. 172.
\end{itemize}
Germans are not that farfetched; after all, the cultural turmoil that came from invasion in 1940, seemingly indefinite German occupation alongside the Vichy Regime, and finally liberation by foreign armies in 1944-1945, was deeply disorienting for the French.\textsuperscript{145} It had also brought about a wave of French fervor for learning the German language and becoming acquainted with its culture – which was considered ‘culture’ at the behest of the Nazis and French collaborators.\textsuperscript{146} Claims of the FBZ as ‘little Vichy’ – both by contemporaries and in historical research –emphasize the similarities between Western Europe during World War II and the occupation era. Cultural and personal ties existed in addition to the resentment many felt toward each other; as such, Franco-German relations in the FBZ were somewhat more complex than simple hostility.

Evidence of cultural ties between the peoples were commonplace in articles; one such in \textit{Die Rheinpfalz} in June 1946 detailed how French occupiers and their German partners could obtain a marriage license.\textsuperscript{147} These marriages were technically still illegal, and would be until September 1947.\textsuperscript{148} This raises the question: was \textit{Die Rheinpfalz} lying or misrepresenting the truth about occupation policy, and if so, why? Numerous possible motives for lying, such as urging the French to legalize these unions, come to mind. However, it is likely that, since the marriage ban only applied to occupation administrators, the intended audience was those administrators who had resigned their position, their families, or perhaps French tourists. To this end, French domestic politics

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in 1945-1946 were focusing on reversing Vichy’s racist citizenship policies and repealing its denaturalizations, as well as transferring ultimate control over nationality from the Ministry of Justice to the Ministry of Populations.\textsuperscript{149} So, it is also possible that the French administration looked the other way on such loopholes while updating their own naturalization policies so that French-German marriage partners would receive the appropriate citizenship. Despite the questionable validity of the procedure outlined in \textit{Die Rheinpfalz}, the article shows, first, that the press clearly had an agenda; they encouraged German obedience and acceptance of French paternalism and culture. Second, given the supposed censorship, which meant that their words would be read by administrators after the fact at the very least, occupiers probably more or less approved of the marriages.

Numerous articles show that French opinions from other civil and literary circles found representation in FBZ newspapers as well. In February 1947, \textit{Die Rheinpfalz} printed an essay by celebrated French writer André Gide about his symbolic embrace of Germany, which the newspaper described as “true words of reconciliation [or ‘atonement’].”\textsuperscript{150} “Germany-France” was written by Gide in 1918, but the themes of Franco-German reconciliation were relevant in the FBZ after World War II as well. This essay was a natural choice for \textit{Die Rheinpfalz} since it emphasized the spiritual connection between the two nations – a regular component of their own columns. Essentially, Gide wrote, the Germans and the French were similar peoples with a similar plight. “No deceit is more ominous for the peoples [\textit{Völker}] and people [\textit{Menschen}] as the assumption that they could get along without the partner. All conflicts of interest between France and

Germany are a similar calamity [or ‘evil’] for both.”¹⁵¹ This essay also echoes an idea from an earlier chapter in this thesis: the press frequently alluded to the Second World War as a destructive force which plagued Europe as a whole, instead of one country inflicting damage on the other. The press sought spiritual answers to their secular problems, often suggesting recognition of Christian brotherhood, as in the above quote. As such, the Christian ‘moment’ outlined in the first chapter persisted in various forms through 1947.

In the aftermath of the April Moscow Conference (a meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers), the article “Germany in the mirror of the French press” wrote that the French public valued German reconstruction even in light of their own difficulties.¹⁵² Newspapers like L’aurore and Le Populaire emphasized the importance of “solving the German problem,” a central task in the rebuilding of Europe.¹⁵³ As left-leaning, even socialist publications, these reflect the political orientation of the politicians like Emile Laffon who sought to rebuild a more liberal Germany. Articles like this suggest that encouraging reconciliation of the two peoples was not only a diplomatic priority, but was supported by the French press as well. Their newspapers were not censored like the German press in the FBZ; as such, this agreement across national borders indicates, first, that these conciliatory sentiments were not exclusive to Germans. To be certain, this evidence does not necessarily suggest that everyone in the FBZ respected their occupiers; it does, however, suggest that this mentality had like-minded factions outside the German

¹⁵¹ Ibid.
¹⁵³ Ibid.
press. Second, this unity of the French and German press further calls into question the idea that the FBZ was an oppressive environment for newspapers since an uncensored domestic press and a censored press in Germany were often in agreement. It is possible that the ideas the censors sought to promote were simply in line with those of French free press outlets, but this seems unlikely.

If, as argued, the occupation period can be separated into two phases – before the Cold War and at its outset – would the nature of the relationship between French and Germans change in the years following 1947? In short, the answer is yes and no. On the one hand, the reasons for French and German friendship became vastly different after 1947 – rather than the social reconciliation of two historically opposed nations, their alliance was based on their membership in the Western bloc, with the Anglo-Americans as their guardians. As such, their friendship became a natural component in a world with a clear and present danger – the communists in the East, the supposed ‘inheritors’ of Nazi totalitarianism. Yet, on the other hand, their relationship did not change in the sense that some of the rhetoric shown in this thesis did not conflict with the rhetoric of the Cold War, and therefore transferred naturally. Put differently, unlike many other Cold War debates in Germany such as war guilt, the Christian origins of Franco-German reconciliation were compatible with future anti-communist sentiments, since the Soviets and SED were an ‘atheist menace.’ The final chapter of this thesis will present evidence from the local press to demonstrate that, while French and Germans had new reasons to come to terms with one another in 1947 and onward – i.e. opposition to the Soviet Union

– this did not necessitate the wholesale replacement of all the metaphysical and spiritual ideas voiced in the first years. As such, Franco-German reconciliation remained intact.

3.2. Politics in the Press, 1945-1947

Political debates in the first two years of occupation in the FBZ took various forms in the local press. First, columns written by the editors appeared in most editions, generally on the front page. Second, there were occasional letters written by local government or occupation officials, some of which merely echoed the official decrees of their respective authorities while others participated in the debate over the future of German politics. Third, there were letters written by other inhabitants of the FBZ, including religious officials as well as ordinary citizens who wanted to take part in the conversation. Finally, in the months preceding the first local elections, there were sections called ‘small newspapers’ meant to represent the platforms of the new political parties. The progression from strict management of politics in the local press to permission for disseminating the parties’ platforms indicates a realization that the French valued democracy over nihilism. In other words, the backlash against political culture in 1945-1946 gradually gave way to an embracing of ‘western values.’ The following pages will trace the presence of parties and discussion of politics in the local newspapers.

In the early postwar era, newspapers in the FBZ did not fit into political categories as neatly they eventually would; this was due to a couple primary factors. First, it was a requirement for the press to maintain nonpartisanship for a license.\textsuperscript{155} The words of the press in response to this were discussed in the first chapter; to summarize,

\textsuperscript{155} Eschenburg, \textit{Jahre der Besatzung}, pp. 155-156.
journalists welcomed the opportunity, at least on paper, to move beyond being the Reich’s political puppets. The German word for nonpartisan, ‘überparteilich,’ has a noteworthy connotation. Rather than being a direct translation of nonpartisan, which would be ‘unparteilich’ (this is actually a word, but used less frequently), the word ‘überparteilich’ more literally means ‘above parties.’ Correspondingly, the role of the press was to create a dialogue with their respective communities above politics. In reality, the press did not maintain utter impartiality – as previously shown, they catered most noticeably to the interests of the Catholic Church, which certainly benefitted the CDU. The fact that the postwar German press often agreed on spiritual, often Christian, principles gives credence to the idea that this represented a core of German culture exposed by the carnage of 1945.

The second reason it is difficult to politically categorize newspapers in the FBZ was, indeed, their focus on Christianity. They seem to have genuinely prioritized spirituality over politics, especially in the early months; in this regard the radical social change encouraged by many French planners certainly found a German press willing to herald their ideas. As this thesis has shown, these discussions of Germany’s future were held predominantly in metaphysical and spiritual terms. However, as the domestic situation improved, especially after the harsh winter of 1945-1946, secular political theory became the topic of much debate. In contrast to early articles, many of which argued ideas similar to those in “One cannot eat politics,” later writers adopted more political rhetoric, seemingly with the realization that “Amoral is not, nevertheless, 

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identical to power, though power easily seduces one to the abandonment of principles.”157

This attitude paved the way to a reassertion of politics and Germany’s capacity for self-government. Nonetheless, German identity centered on guilt, as in Karl Jasper’s conception of the ‘pariah nation,’158 as well as opposition to “the old, naïve and, in a noble sense, childish form of nationalism.”159 These political discussions were simultaneously cultural; making a cultural break was part of political change, and vice versa. Politics in the press had transitioned from being a tool of Christianity to an equal partner in German social rebirth.

The Schwäbisches Tagblatt instituted a both visual and symbolic break with the past in October 1946, on their first anniversary, by replacing the traditional German blackletter typeset with what is more familiar to us today.160 The content of the article was a retrospective on the newspaper’s founding in the wake of the Second World War. The Tagblatt wrote:

The new newspapers… [were] organs of publication with an editor and editing staff, which was assembled from all parties. To name examples from our own newspaper: from the five editors is one – simultaneously the business manager of the publishing company and press – W.H. Hebsacker without party. Werner Steinberg is a member of the KPD, Dr. Ernst Müller [is a] member of the SPD, Alfred Schwenger [is a] member of the CDU; Ms. Schnittenhelm stands, without ties to the party, for the DVP. [Emphasis in original]161

Of course, the validity of the press’ claim of complete nonpartisanship is dubious, especially since it would allow them to push a political agenda more covertly. With its

157 “Macht und Ordnung,“ Badische Zeitung (30 April 1946), pp. 3.
161 Ibid.
frequent and blatant appeals for connections between the churches and government, *Die Rheinpfalz* had the most obvious political slant while claiming the most objectivity.

*Die Rheinpfalz* was the only newspaper of the three represented in this thesis to feature regular party mini-newspapers in 1946, though similar sections were likely printed elsewhere. This section was titled “The parties have the word,” in which each of the four major political parties – the CDU (Christian Democratic Union), SPD (Social Democratic Party of Germany), DVP (Democratic People’s Party of Württemberg), and KPD (Communist Party of Germany) – contributed special articles to promote their party. The results of this are not surprising; the CDU, emphasizing conservative, traditional and Christian values sponsored the most articles, followed by the SPD with its social democratic values. A year later, in mid-1947, French occupation administration decreed in light of that year’s local elections – the first postwar elections in which Germans were elected to regional positions – that each party was to sponsor a newspaper as its official organ. Each of the four parties was to be represented in each of the three *Länder* in the FBZ – therefore, twelve newspapers became party organs. More research is required to illuminate the process by which the parties and newspapers linked up with one another. Who approached whom? Why were some newspapers founded for the sole purpose of supporting a political party while others were attached to established newspapers? For the topic at hand, out of the twenty-nine newspapers started in the FBZ between 1945 and 1949, none of the three represented in this thesis became official party

162 “Die Parteien haben das Wort” was a section featured in the later pages of each edition of *Die Rheinpfalz* from July 1946 until the elections that October.

organs.\textsuperscript{164} Therefore, they maintained at least the appearance of nonpartisanship – though the reality of such a claim is debatable.

An article published in the \textit{Badische Zeitung} in January 1947 discussed the role of the past in shaping Germany’s future. Typical of an article from the early occupation period, “Learning from History?” presented a set of mostly philosophical problems that faced Germans. Though Heinz Holldack was a historically-minded journalist, and therefore ostensibly more scholarly, he addressed the spiritual situation of Germany. Holldack wrote, “The horrible demise of German spirituality, which unfolded under the National Socialist leadership, the collapse of the German authority, yes the annihilation of the existence of the German state which ended with Hitler, have startled historical researchers.”\textsuperscript{165} This excerpt shows that even someone who would go on to write an academic history of the Nazi era saw the “demise of German spirituality” as an integral aspect of the wrongs of Nazism.\textsuperscript{166} Clearly, his conclusion itself is dubious; historians of subsequent generations have questioned the mythical dearth of religiosity in Nazi Germany.\textsuperscript{167}

In answering how Germans could learn from their history, Holldack argued, “The values and non-values of the past are set by the present.”\textsuperscript{168} In other words, recognition of the past as a construct, and even projection, of the present would help Germans avoid

\textsuperscript{164} Peter Köpf, \textit{Schreiben nach jeder Richtung}, pp. 222-232.
\textsuperscript{165} Heinz Holldack, “Lernen aus der Geschichte?” \textit{Badische Zeitung} (10 January 1947), p. 3.
\textsuperscript{166} See Heinz Holldack, \textit{Was wirklich geschah; die diplomatischen Hintergründe der deutschen Kriegspolitik} (Munich: Nymphenburger Verlagshandlung, 1949).
\textsuperscript{167} Important recent works on religion in Nazi Germany are John Connelly, \textit{From Enemy to Brother: The Revolution in Catholic Teaching on the Jews, 1933-1965} (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), and Steigmann-Gall, \textit{The Holy Reich}.
\textsuperscript{168} Holldack, “Lernen aus der Geschichte?”
repeating the atrocities of the Nazi era, which had been grounded partially in an attempt to rewrite the ‘failures’ of World War I and the interwar period. Holldack’s essay also highlights that Germans were had not yet adopted a Cold War mindset – subconsciously, of course. In the conclusion of “Learning from History?” Holldack wrote “To where the connection between militarism, capitalism and nationalism has driven us – the most [regularly] discussed dangers of our near past – we experience every day.” The fact that Holldack dared to include capitalism, a cornerstone of modern western democracy, in the laundry list of negative traits of the Nazi regime indicates that the newspapers – still officially subject to censorship – were not yet espousing anti-Soviet arguments when discussing politics. It would have been simple to substitute ‘totalitarianism’ for ‘capitalism’ in this instance, as many writers would soon do.

In May 1947 *Die Rheinpfalz* published a column about the transition to German democracy titled “Why we vote.” This article did not give common Cold War-era reasons for voting like preventing the spread of communism, but rather was still focused on breaking with past German traditions. The press was still first and foremost concerned with overcoming the legacy of Nazism, which is indicated in the first sentence: “Behind us lay years of hopelessness, of emergency, of economic and political chaos.” The article went on to clarify that this included not only the Nazi era, but the immediate postwar period, which reflects the belief that the suffering of occupation was a direct outcome of Nazism and the war. Of course, the destroyed buildings of the late 1940s in

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169 Ibid.


171 Ibid.
Germany were a result of bombing in World War II, but more generally the press saw distress under Allied rule as an epilogue and punishment for Nazism.

“Why we vote” did not completely avoid the East-West conflict – a couple sentences addressed the disunity between the Allies at the Moscow Conference – but the intention of the article was to encourage voting as a way of fostering anti-fascism. In Streiter’s words, “It is comfortable to take each day as it comes and to attribute all guilt to the bad temper [schlechte Laune, as in ‘bad mood’] of the goddess of war. It is important, however, to seek out the roots of all evils, which we now endure, and exterminate them from our Volk.”172 This excerpt shows that Germans in the FBZ after the first year of occupation still understood Germany solely as a post-Nazi state, not a ‘Western partner.’ As was the case with the Allies before 1947, Germans were most concerned with breaking from Nazism, not anti-communism.173

Further examples of pre-Cold War political rhetoric are in Hans von Eckhardt’s series of columns in Die Rheinpfalz called “The German Question.” In these, Eckhardt discussed the future of German politics, beginning one article by writing, “Since the unconditional capitulation, two years have passed. From a hopeful excitement, which followed the anxious ossification of the previous Hitler era, where everything waited on the downfall, not much has occurred [politically].”174 This article shows that the press had not yet shied away from mentioning Nazism; the culture of avoiding direct mention to Hitler had not emerged yet. As for the specifics of German politics, Eckhardt went on to write, “The problem [of] centralism or federalism is not simple. It is the question of

172 Ibid.
173 Rogers, Politics After Hitler, pp. 139-143.
which functions are to be assigned to which offices.”

Interestingly, a Gallup survey in September 1946 in all four occupation zones found that 58% of Germans favored a German state with a strong central government while 41% preferred a federal system (1% was without opinion).

By late 1946 the discussion of politics in the press had moved away from implying a Church role in government or seriously considering any radical political system such as pure socialism (this was likely due partially to the French stifling of political activity in the FBZ outside the four major parties), but was not yet harping on anti-communism as would be the case in the years to come. The transition to the Cold War was beginning; with an influx of democratic capitalist ideology, the emphasis on spirituality declined in the press. The conclusion will pick up this discussion of politics as it played out from 1947 until the conclusion of occupation in mid-1949.

3.3. Denazification, Purges, and War Crimes Trials

Denazification in Germany was met with suspicion and frustration by some; rhetoric coming from the American camp, which had been mostly responsible for drawing up the plans for purging Nazism, simply spoke of it as a hurdle. The French – whose approach to occupation clashed with that of the Anglo-Americans – were certainly not more in favor of extensive and deep denazification. As a result, some Germans adopted the opinion that the sooner it could be ‘checked off’ the better. Yet, as time

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175 Ibid.
177 Rogers, Politics After Hitler, pp. 140-141.
178 Judt, Postwar, pp. 54-58.
progressed, Germans in the FBZ reconsidered the longevity of the process for both its legal and cultural significance. Since denazification was a way of identifying and punishing Nazi war criminals as well as regular followers, its connection to the war trials, in Nuremberg and elsewhere, was clear. Indeed, these were all components of the Allied effort to reeducate Germans and create a more liberal and democratic society. As such, the German attitude toward denazification reflected the duality of collective guilt and scapegoating the Nazi elite; rejecting the targeting of ‘followers,’ or Mitläufer, while simultaneously embracing denazification’s value as a cultural rejuvenator indicates confusion over the meaning of German guilt in the occupation era. The following section will explore this dynamic.

Denazification was understood by many Germans, initially, as an inconvenient, if necessary, process. This feeling of inconvenience was reinforced by the perception that Allied high command considered the occupation of Germany a burden, and a waste of their labor pools. In fall 1945, General Dwight D. Eisenhower announced denazification in the American Zone, and Die Rheinpfalz and the Freiburger Nachrichten published brief articles reiterating the news. In both cases, it was implied that the American government wanted to proceed with the rehabilitation of German labor as soon as possible to relieve their own staffs. The Freiburger Nachrichten paraphrased Eisenhower’s words in the American newspaper the Neue Zeitung:

We will help the German people with reconstruction, but we will in no event work for them. The German people must be clear on the fact that if they want to survive the harsh winter that lies before us, they must free themselves of the herd mentality which possessed them in previous years. Germany must once again
become a nation of *peaceful workers* who are only capable of *individual initiative*, otherwise there is no future. [Emphasis in original]^{179}

Eisenhower’s message shows that the American approach to occupation was less focused on long-term personnel investments and more on rapid rehabilitation. This stance was represented in *Die Rheinpfalz* as well, which wrote on Eisenhower’s proclamation:

> Personnel of the military government are to pull out as soon as possible and as a result a unified and appointed corps of *non-Nazi civil servants* are to be on hand... the military personnel of the American department of the Allied Control Council for Germany to be to be replaced by American civilians as rapidly as possible. Until July 1946, all positions in the civilian departments will be taken over. [Emphasis in original]^{180}

Eisenhower’s approach contrasted with that of the French, which initially valued an extended presence in Germany beyond mid-1946; after all, the French did have the most personnel in their occupation zone despite it being the smallest in population and area.^{181}

German opinion seems to have been conflicted about denazification; at times, the newspapers shared Eisenhower’s view that the German personnel must be quickly reinstated, while other times they deemed a long-term Allied guidance necessary. Essentially, they were mirroring the Anglo-American and French officials’ debates over occupation policy at the community level.

After the announcement of Eisenhower’s plans early in the occupation, the newspapers continued to discuss the importance and ramifications of the denazification process as well as the political purges on a higher level. Some articles even encouraged

\[\text{References:}\]


^{181} Willis, *The French in Germany*, p. 88.
an expansion of denazification so it would affect more ex-party members. An article in
the *Tagblatt* exemplified the debates over the tenacity of denazification:

> Almost a half year has passed since the Allied troops freed us from National
Socialism, or at least freed us from Hitler, his provincial leaders, district leaders
and local group leaders [Gauleitern, Kreisleitern und Ortsgruppenleitern]. But is
this enough? One gets the feeling that the purge hasn’t actually proceeded with
the needed vigor, especially as the Nazis display an apish dexterity when it
concerns their presenting proof that they were actually (12 years and longer!) not
National Socialists, but rather had always been good democrats.¹⁸²

This excerpt shows that local populations were concerned with the pardoning of Nazi
party members who were perhaps only nominally responsible for Hitler’s murderous
programs. The fact that they were key party members was reason enough for
denazification to render them political undesirables, suitable only as “laborers” in the
new Germany.¹⁸³ This article, a letter to the editor, also gives us a glimpse into the
perspective of a citizen rather than a journalist. There seems to have been resentment and
infighting as Germans struggled to come to terms with their own guilt as well as that of
their country folk. Articles like the above raise the question: how did average Germans
define the collective? Who was the collective? Most would have agreed this did not mean
the highest-ranking Nazis, but some might have included local and regional party leaders.
For others this may have meant all party members, or even all of German society. As we
have seen, there are traces of each of these perspectives in the local press; the articles that
accepted collective guilt in its entirety – meaning that it included all of German society –
are the subject of the final section of this chapter.

¹⁸³ Ibid.
Accepting collective guilt did not necessarily discount the idea that Nazi leaders were more responsible. Instead, some writers in the local press embraced both, even in the same articles. Although these two ideas have been justifiably treated as contradictory by intellectuals in that period as well as today, the Christian tradition provides a narrative in which they are compatible. This phenomenon is another indication that the religious fervor of the communities revolving around smaller German cities in the French Occupation Zone was quite noticeable, and varied from that of renowned intellectuals and politicians. For example, Konrad Adenauer personally believed that widespread support for, or at least compliance with, the Nazi regime had been central to its power; however, he rarely made this point publicly because he felt it would prevent the rehabilitation of Germans into Western society and hurt his chances at being elected.\textsuperscript{184} Instead, local German newspapers often juxtaposed these two ideas, including them in the same religious-historical narrative.

But what did collective guilt actually entail for Germans, and what was its function in society? One theory on guilt in Western culture posits that the Judeo-Christian tradition forms a “transcendent” definition of morality.\textsuperscript{185} Put differently, belief in the law of God establishes a moral norm, regardless of context, unlike Japanese culture, which emphasizes “situational ethics” instead.\textsuperscript{186} Furthermore, Japanese culture responds to a personal wrongdoing with ‘shame,’ while Westerners adopt ‘guilt.’\textsuperscript{187} In reality, as the evidence in this thesis has shown, Christian ethics in Germany were not (and are not)

\begin{footnotes}
\item[186] Berger, \textit{War}, p. 28
\item[187] Berger, \textit{War}, p. 27.
\end{footnotes}
static, but certainly changed at the end of World War II and in the early postwar period. Though the idea that a single set of unchanging Christian principles guided the German nation before and after the collapse of the Hitler regime may be a fallacy, the fact that the average citizen believed them as such reinforces their validity as a driver of culture and history. As such, collective guilt – formed as a component of collective memory – came out of spiritual beliefs.

If collective guilt was essentially a religious construct, what was legally expected of Germans after 1945? Telford Taylor, an American prosecutor at the Nuremberg trials, noted that it was too easy to show that many Germans “had been wrongfully hurt by the leaders of the Third Reich. [Emphasis in original]”¹⁸⁸ Accordingly, Tony Judt argues, “From the outset the German War Crimes trials were as much about pedagogy as justice” since legal guilt was often difficult to prove.¹⁸⁹ In the Allies conception, the trials themselves had not been intended to punish the collective guilt of the German nation – even though that concept was largely accepted by the Allied powers at the very least, if not many Germans themselves – but to make an example out of those who violated international peace. As Jaspers argued early in the postwar era, the categories of moral and metaphysical guilt were truths that Germans had to face and reconcile within themselves.¹⁹⁰ Therefore, Germans in the postwar era were faced with a guilt that had no corresponding punishment; it was a vague concept propagated by political and

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¹⁸⁸ Quoted in Tony Judt, Postwar, 53.
¹⁸⁹ Ibid.
¹⁹⁰ Joseph W. Koterski, Introduction, The question of German guilt, by Karl Jaspers, trans. E.B. Ashton, 1948 (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001), pp. ix-xi. The mention of Jaspers here is only for his theories, not his status in Germany itself since, as mentioned, his works were not likely read by many average Germans in the occupation era.
intellectual elites. In this metaphysical vacuum, Germans were left to both define their guilt and how to come to terms with it. Contrary to Allied intentions, Germans placed the prosecution of high ranking Nazis within a religious framework, and as a part of their own process of coming to terms with the past.

Examining collective guilt and scapegoating the Nazi leadership as a part of the same cultural-ideological paradigm suggests that German postwar society was ultimately pious; at the center of their understanding of political and cultural reconstruction were Christian beliefs. Post-World War II Germans’ need to reconcile their understanding of the Hitler years – and their guilt for events that transpired during that time – with their religious beliefs suggests that German society previously rationalized and legitimized the rise of the Nazis this way, as well as the persecution of the Jews. For example, the justifications surrounding the ‘mercy killings’ of the Nazi T4 euthanasia program – although not supported by all Germans or all church leaders – were generally tinged with religious rhetoric.\footnote{Debórah Dwork and Robert Jan van Pelt, \textit{Holocaust: A History} (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2002), pp. 261-262.} This evidence suggests that at the core of German society in the 1940s was an underlying belief in Christianity.

The local press in the FBZ characteristically emphasized religious ideas in their discussion of German guilt, even in discussing philosophy. The \textit{Freiburger Nachrichten} quoted a lecture by Karl Jaspers at the University of Heidelberg: “That we live is our guilt. We know before God what deeply humbles us… the devil has smashed us in and rocked us in a confusion that decayed our hearing and sight.”\footnote{Quoted in “Jaspers über die Schuld,” \textit{Freiburger Nachrichten} (11 September 1945), p. 1.} This Jaspers quote
severely truncates his theories; rather than giving a summary of his disparate concepts of moral, metaphysical, judicial and political guilt – though, admittedly, his chief work on the subject, *Die Schuldfrage*, would not be published until 1946 – the local press referred only to his ideas on moral and metaphysical guilt. Responsibility for the Nazi era was understood as a part of Christianity; Nazism was a modern evil of Biblical proportions. Christian guilt provided meaning as well as punishment for the horrors of the Nazi era.

Evidence in the local press suggests that the Christian guilt complex of ‘original sin’ became the framework for the German understanding of their political and legal guilt. The ills of the Nazi era would never be atoned for, and the German nation would always be culpable for the terror unleashed by Hitler. The Christian narrative became a stand-in for legal guilt because it promised punishment and atonement. These lines were regularly blurred linguistically; for example, the newspapers favored the word ‘Sühne’ for ‘atonement,’ which has religious connotations as well as legal. Another example comes from the *Schwäbisches Tagblatt*:

> The damages, which are inflicted on the spiritual [geistig] and mental [seelisch] unfolding of the individual through de-individualization [Vermassung], are not incurable… It may be of use, especially in view of the last 12 years, to consciously develop the character of rational thought – objectivity, criticism, chaste, suppression of feelings when they disrupt insight – through the education and care of the spirit, to dissolve the bondage of the previous years and make the misuse of a mass of intrinsic powers impossible.\(^{193}\)

An initial linguistic note is that the word ‘seelisch’ was translated here as ‘mental,’ though it more broadly and literally means ‘of or relating to the soul.’ The present context also makes the term ‘seelisch’ an allusion to religious ideas, especially when mentioned

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alongside the word ‘spiritual’ (‘geistig’). Therefore – along with numerous other examples of quasi-religious terminology – the abovementioned article discussed the dynamics of group psychology in relation to the Nazi regime with a religious tinge. Falling in with the ideas of Hitler was not the fault of an individual alone, but, as the title suggests, the “individual and the great masses.”

Coming to terms with the meaning of this guilt paralleled Christian original sin. Rather than atoning for the sins of all of mankind, however, this referred only to the German nation.

This desire by many in occupied Germany for harsher punishments for Nazi war criminals – despite the criticism of the way the trials were conducted as well as their legal legitimacy – has been noticed by several historians. This evidence does not necessarily contradict the dominant theory that Germans naturally scapegoated their guilt onto leaders, nor that this excuse was problematic for their own acceptance of guilt; however, this chapter does argue that grassroots support for punishing Nazi war criminals was founded in religious beliefs, and was compatible with their early acceptance of collective guilt.

The term scapegoating, or ‘Sündenbock,’ comes from the Christian tradition but is also a psychological concept in German – as it is in English. In Leviticus, Aaron brought two goats and a ram to God; the ram was to be sacrificed, atoning for the crimes of man, which is the origin of the German ‘ram of sins,’ and the other was allowed to escape, hence the English word ‘scapegoat.’ Put differently, the German term actually refers to a different part of the story than the English; the former refers to the blood offering while

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194 Ibid.
195 For example, Gehler, *Three Germanies*, p. 28, and Berger, *War, Guilt, and World Politics*, p. 44.
the latter refers to the goat that escaped bearing man’s sins. The sacrifice of the ram provided the basis for atonement in this German linguistic paradigm, while in English it would have implied banishment.

Linguistic differences aside, the purpose of the scapegoat in Leviticus was man’s atonement, achieved through the symbolic punishment of a bearer of guilt. In a culture that was permeated with Christian influence, it is not surprising that this tradition extended to the discourse over denazification. The local press in the FBZ often expressed frustration at the targeting of ‘average’ citizens rather than Nazi high command because their primary objective was to aid Germany’s social transition to normality. This position was in line with Jasper’s idea of Germany as a ‘pariah nation;’ however, the ‘Sündenbock’ paradigm seems to provide a better model for understanding that notion in tandem with the frustration at the lessened sentences or pardoning of Nazi elites.

Additionally, every mention of Jaspers and Die Schuldfrage in the local press was abridged, and thereby intended to promote spiritual rebirth. So, while Jaspers was certainly influential in postwar Germany, his influence amidst the rubble was part of a greater grassroots transformation led by the press.

Newspapers rarely expressed these ideas overtly. However, two articles written just after the beginning of the war trials at Nuremberg are telling. The Schwäbisches Tagblatt wrote, “Guilt and the atonement of the verdict correspond to one another. Each atonement would also, however, be a symbol for our fatherland’s moral rebirth and

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196 Rabinbach, In the Shadow of Catastrophe, pp. 144-145.
recovery.” As this article shows, it was self-explanatory that the verdicts at Nuremberg would be symbolic for the German nation. Similarly, an article in the Freiburger Nachrichten referred to nominally guilty party members as “political sinners,” making an explicit parallel between legal and Christian guilt. Each prosecution of Nazi high command was a symbolic building block of the new German republic. The imagery of the blood sacrifice was then further substantiated by the execution of ten of the most important living Nazis.

In addition to demonstrating the connection between national guilt and Christian ideals, this Tagblatt article shows how atoning for the Nazi past necessitated a political purge, phrased here to make “the misuse of a mass of intrinsic powers impossible.” Similar urging for bringing Nazi leadership to justice and purging the German government, especially, was common throughout the local press in the FBZ. This idea played out in numerous articles criticizing the ‘not guilty’ pleas of SS men or lessened sentences for convicted war criminals. In these articles, the accused in question were openly denounced as well as dehumanized. For example, in Die Rheinpfalz in January 1947, Oskar Höhn, the local Nazi party official charged with orchestrating local anti-Jewish violence during Kristallnacht in 1938 was characterized thus: “His continued denial presents him, apart from this, as a person who is stubborn, malicious and without

199 Various articles covered the sentencing at Nuremberg, for example Will Hanns Hebsacker “Nürnberg: ein Ende und ein Anfang,” Schwäbisches Tagblatt (4 October 1946), p. 1, as well as other war trials such as the Nazi doctor trials, as in “Die Sühne für das Spiel mit Menschenleben,” Die Rheinpfalz (4 October 1946), p. 1.
200 Ibid.
character. Only through a strict punishment could it be proven that the time of lawlessness is overcome and, also, every crime has been atoned for.” In this way, the local press argued that the Nazis on trial had a moral baseness, and that the punishment of these figures was essential to the rehabilitation of the German nation.

The title of the above article, “Atonement for the Jewish Action in Kaiserslautern,” can be interpreted as carrying two different meanings. The first and most obvious is the atonement of the Nazi official discussed in the article, whose ‘not guilty’ plea would have meant his atonement. However, a second meaning to the article becomes plausible when placed in the context of the prevailing religiosity of the day. Since the article equates Höhn’s punishment with the trial of the Nazi regime itself, the conviction was a kind of atonement for the German people. In other words, it is as though the newspaper was suggesting that the conviction of Höhn was “Atonement for the Jewish Action in Kaiserslautern” – for Germans. It is likely these both rang true, and the title was meant to have a double meaning.

Anger and disbelief similar to that directed at Höhn came from the press in regard to other Nazis accused of war crimes. In August 1946, a Schwäbisches Tagblatt article in response to the proceedings of the trial of SS (Schutzstaffel) concentration camp commanders showed characteristic disbelief and sarcasm to their not guilty pleas. The title to this article was “The ‘not guilty’ SS,” while the subtitle read, “Murder of POWs, persecution of the Jews and KZ [concentration camp] atrocities are illuminated.” With the title and subtitle leaving no confusion about the tenor of the article, the language of which expressed their anger and confusion:

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The witness [Paul Hausser, former Lieutenant-General of the Waffen SS] found the documents laid forth by the prosecution about the organized murder of Jews and Poles applicable only to the greater SS organization, but not incriminating for the Waffen-SS; he *had to eventually admit*, however, that the Waffen-SS took part in these atrocities. [Emphasis added]

This excerpt reflects that the press unquestionably held the Waffen-SS responsible for these crimes; the notion that they would deny their guilt was unthinkable. By writing that Hausser “had to admit” his guilt, the *Schwäbisches Tagblatt* implied that the guilt of the high ranking Nazis was an indisputable fact. Since the article also emphasized that he was one actor in a much larger organization, this supports the argument that the press found the notion of collective guilt – which implies the inability to pinpoint guilt on one person – compatible with the scapegoating of Nazi elite. Put differently, the guilt of this singular figure in the SS was a microcosm of the way guilt played out in greater German society.

*Die Rheinpfalz* was the most vocal about its disapproval of Nazi elites who sought to or succeeded in evading punishment in war crime trials. Often, the titles were derived from these not guilty pleas, as in “’No one is responsible for one murder!’” and “No defendant to be guilty!’” The press’ disbelief comes across first in the titles to these articles; one of them placed the title in quotes, to show that it originated in the trial itself, and both placed exclamation points at the end to indicate the absurdity of a ‘not guilty’ ruling. The articles go on to criticize the defense pleas of the defendants. Alfred Jodl’s defense strategy at the Nuremburg Trials – that the actions of the Wehrmacht did not constitute “murder” because the army did not know Hitler’s grand plans – was

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particularly criticized. For example, the press emphasized his repeated claim that “[his] honor is not tainted!” It should also be mentioned that Jodl’s first name was never given in this article – not even in the subtitle when his last name is introduced – which indicates that it was likely a household name by that point and newspapers saw no need to print it, as was often the case with Adolf Hitler.

Both scapegoating Nazi elites and accepting collective guilt functioned as components of Christian original sin and salvation. By accepting that they had sinned, which paralleled collective guilt, Germans could redeem themselves – though they would forever carry the burden. This thinking was future-oriented, a prerequisite for rebuilding society. Secondly, by scapegoating the ‘guiltiest’ Nazi ringleaders, Germans atoned for Nazi era crimes as a collective; this was past-oriented. With these two aspects of guilt culture, Germans were able to orient their current situation between two now explicable periods, the Nazi past and a redeemed future. In the earliest days of Allied occupation, Germans were in a dire and perplexing situation, both psychologically and materially; the search for comprehension brought them back to the Christian narrative because it gave them a metaphysical framework with which to understand their plight. It was not as though Germans did not discuss politics in the newspapers, but spirituality was often central to building an anti-fascist, democratic government.

4. Dawn of the Cold War Binary, 1947 to 1949

Though 1947 is generally considered the beginning of the Cold War, Western anti-communism and Joseph Stalin’s deep distrust of the Anglo-Americans well predated the end, and even beginning, of World War II. This is further complicated by the fact that there is no single day, or even month, on which war was waged or fighting began between the primary combatants, the United States and Soviet Union. Without the typical ground invasions or declarations of war by which historians normally differentiate between tension and conflict, John Lewis Gaddis and others have pointed to 1947 as the metaphorical dawn of the Cold War. In retrospect, some events preceding this watershed year seem to have been features of the impending East-West conflict – it may, however, be more accurate to think of those as causal, rather than indicative, of the war. Pre-1939 anti-communism was by no means unrelated to the escalation of Cold War tensions, but the widespread monolithic ideological indoctrination that came with the second half of the twentieth century was highly radicalized. The cultural outcomes of the Cold War, therefore, would not be fully realized until the failure of the Soviets and Western powers to maintain friendly diplomatic relations in 1947, and the subsequent entrenching of their ideological defenses.

In the first years after World War II, the chief enemy of both the Soviets and Western powers, especially in their planning for occupation, continued to be the ‘specter of Nazi Germany.’ In fact, the French insistence on their approach to occupation, the so-called French thesis, was perhaps the primary obstacle to German unification before

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205 Gaddis, We Now Know.
206 Rogers, Politics After Hitler, pp. 139-143.
1947; since the reconstruction of German politics was not considered an important strategic and symbolic victory for either communism or democracy, the Soviet Union and United States did not intend to delay the restoration of German sovereignty.\textsuperscript{207} Though reparations were important for the economic recovery of, particularly, France and the USSR, the Big Three saw German autonomy central to broader European reconstruction, and thus planned for a relatively quick and total withdrawal. Zonal boundaries were intended not to be ‘hard’ borders, but ‘soft’; the French were the first to mostly close their zonal border and treat their zone as national property. Of course, the Allies’ idealism did not foresee the disparities between their ideas for Germany’s future, either.\textsuperscript{208} Therefore, French stymieing in the Allied Control Council (ACC) over the organization of postwar Germany made its zonal boundaries unstable.\textsuperscript{209}

With the French disrupting plans for the return of German sovereignty, all four occupying powers changed their focus on Germany. By the end of 1946, the Americans and British had planned for the fusion of their two zones into one economic and administrative unit called the ‘Bizone,’ which was formed over the course of the first half of 1947.\textsuperscript{210} Despite these signs of interzonal cooperation, however, the French continued to prevent zonal unity, still clutching to their dreams of a weak, decentralized Germany subject to international economic incorporation.

The French finally gave in to Anglo-American appeals for reunification when they lost the support of many former supporters in the ACC. The Soviet Union, British

\textsuperscript{207} Willis, \textit{The French in Germany}, p. 26.
\textsuperscript{209} Willis, \textit{The French in Germany}, p. 28.
\textsuperscript{210} Ibid.
and Americans had vacillated on their treatment of French demands, but finally changed their tack in early 1947 at the Moscow Conference – at which they finally rejected the French Thesis in whole.\textsuperscript{211} By that time, however, the inherent ideological tensions between the Soviets and the Anglo-Americans had surfaced, and the window for German post-World War II unity had closed.

The death of the French Thesis in 1947 was aided by the elimination of the various concerns. First, the Marshall Plan eliminated the necessity for long-term economic exploitation in the FBZ. Second, the French Communist Party had been ousted from President Paul Ramadier’s cabinet. Finally, fears of German retaliation had not come to fruition thanks to continued British and American presence on the continent, on the one hand, and German submissiveness on the other.\textsuperscript{212} In summary, in 1947, the French position in Europe and in geopolitics had changed greatly from 1945, and the German menace seemed to have been tamed. The French diplomatic turn in 1947 has been the subject of numerous studies already; this thesis instead chronicles the sociocultural effects of the change in occupation policy at the grassroots level. German society in the FBZ reacted to the ‘turn eastward’ by mostly abandoning its early attempt at radical cultural transformation. Instead of maintaining a dialogue about the Nazi past, denouncing political engagement, and valuing spirituality above all else, these Germans came to embrace their role in the ideological struggle against communism. As such, the

\textsuperscript{211} Willis, \textit{The French in Germany}, p. 44.
\textsuperscript{212} Discussions of the French reasons for eventually joining the Anglo-American side in German occupation can be found in Creswell, \textit{A Question of Balance}, pp. 9-10, and Hitchcock, \textit{France Restored}, pp. 68-71.
emphasis on spirituality that emerged in 1945 gradually gave way to more secular political ideas.

As Theodor Eschenburg pointed out, there was in effect never a Trizone in occupied Germany. Instead, the measures to include the FBZ in the economic and governmental framework of the Anglo-American Bizone that began in 1948 were not fully binding until the creation of the Federal Republic in May 1949. In the interim, the likelihood of the impending conflict between East and West sharpened its focus, as it seemed that Germany would likely remain divided for the foreseeable future. It is this period – between French concessions in the ACC in mid-1947 until their complete surrender of zonal autonomy in mid-1949 – that constitutes this chapter.

The first section will use newspaper articles preceding and following 1947 as evidence of social transition in the FBZ. This periodization is meant firstly to uphold that 1947 was the epicenter of the outbreak of the Cold War. Second, the contrast between the last two years of occupation and the first two supports the idea that the intersection of French occupation policy and the postwar German psyche constituted a unique chapter of German history. Indeed, with the diminution of the French attempts to effect cultural change in Germany and the arrival of the Cold War, a significant shift occurred in Germany’s postwar paradigm again by 1949. The retreat of German spirituality, as it became subordinated to political objectives, is evident in the newspapers. Opposition to Russia as a Slavic people, a perception carried over from the Nazi-era and earlier, gave way to the ‘Bolshevik Soviet menace.’ In this discourse, atheism and totalitarianism became the antithesis of the new Christian, democratic West Germany. Furthermore,

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Franco-German reconciliation became less paternalistic; instead, the two nations became equal allies in the Anglo-American-led Western alliance.

The second and final section will serve as the conclusion to this section as well as the thesis. How did Christianity in southwest Germany transition from the period of ardent spirituality to the Federal Republic, a politically active fiefdom of Western capitalism? If anti-communism was the basis for West German identity – and, as a result, central to the narrative of the Nazi past – what happened to the spiritual narrative? German society underwent a major transition during the occupation, resulting partially from the abandonment of French occupation ideas. How should we characterize the early confrontation of the Nazi past, then? What was forgotten and unfulfilled in 1949, as the title of this thesis suggests? These questions and others will be discussed in the conclusion.

4.1. Christianity’s Denouement or Politicization?

If ardent Christianity diminished after 1947, why was support for the CDU so great in West Germany until the 1960s? Rather than providing an antithesis, this preceding era of extreme spirituality was but one factor that contributed to the power of the Christian Democrats in West German politics. Therefore, while monolithic Christianity may have declined after 1947, it did not disappear entirely, but became less absolute and more in line with ‘Western values.’ Put differently, it is more accurate to think of it as a jumping off point. Since the atheism inherent in communism conversely bolstered Christian influence in Germany, postwar spiritual fervor transitioned smoothly
to Cold War dogma. The following section will trace the change of German spirituality in
the press in 1947 and beyond.

As Tony Judt argues in *Postwar*, the transition from the World War II paradigm
to the Cold War paradigm in 1947 can be illustrated with key events on either side of the
temporal divide; the Treaty of Dunkirk of early 1947 – a Franco-British pact to protect
against “future German aggression” [emphasis in original] – is indicative of the former,
while the failure of the Council of Foreign Ministers to come to any substantial
agreements at the London Conference in November and December 1947 reflects the
latter. 214 Though the occupying powers may have continued to see geopolitics through a
World War II lens, fearing German resurgence above all else, residents in the FBZ
functioned in neither a Nazi nor Cold War paradigm; though a significant number of civil
servants may have transferred from the Nazi regime to posts in the FBZ and the Federal
Republic, postwar German society was fundamentally altered. While the relationship
between Allied politicians and diplomats may have been rapidly evolving, Germans in
the FBZ had little contact with those political developments – save for official occupation
publications, which were seen as tools of propaganda, and the local press, which was still
wary of political indoctrination until 1947.

Similar to Judt’s methodology for illustrating the rise of the Cold War, this
section will use newspaper articles to show the transition from monolithic Christianity to
the Cold War mindset in the FBZ. Two columns in *Die Rheinpfalz* demonstrate the
difference between German spirituality at the outset and conclusion of 1947. In a January
1947 essay titled “Jurisdiction,” Ernst Doller attributed the catastrophe of recent German

history to metaphysical errors, and defined guilt in spiritual terms – as outlined in the previous chapters. “The overemphasis of teaching reason and will,” he wrote, “is in our intelligence with the spiritual sickness of our time, and brought us to disaster.”\textsuperscript{215} The press was still fixated on the Nazi past and not deeply impacted by the diplomatic interactions between the Soviets and Western powers. In fact, the press was still questioning to what extent the German people should – or perhaps be allowed to – exist as ‘political beings.’ Doller continued, “There is also, however, an opposition [between the people and political beings], particularly if politics are not oriented to justice, that the people are not political beings alone.”\textsuperscript{216} The local press still favored articles discussing the role of politics in society over how a new political system should be employed in Germany. A year later, explicit anti-communist appeals would become more commonplace in discussions of the Nazi past.

In November 1947, \textit{Die Rheinpfalz} printed an article on the German question titled “Guilt and Atonement.” This essay reflected the beginning of the Cold War in German society. It also mentioned the possibility of a divided German state, an allusion which had not previously been commonplace. Peter Streiter wrote, “However, this recognition also justifies, at the same time, the hope and expectation that today’s victors do not only criticize our past mistakes, but as a result of them draw the implications for their own behavior vis-à-vis Germany and inner-German developments.”\textsuperscript{217} This quote shows several developing attitudes. First, the reference to ‘today’s victors’ implied the Soviet Union, made clear in the subsequent sentences, which read, “The democratic

\textsuperscript{216} Ibid.
system of government is based on a division of powers… whereas in an authoritarian state – this is certainly its most prominent characteristic – power and responsibility lie centrally in one hand.”218 Although the press already used ‘democratic’ as a substitution for ‘anti-Nazi,’ the word now took on a second meaning, ‘anti-communist.’ Similarly, ‘totalitarian’ was equated to the Nazi regime because of its (perceived) resemblance to the socialist system in the East. The change in ideological perspective from the first article to the second reflects the evolution German politics would undergo over the next few years.

_Die Rheinpfalz_ was not alone in its ideological transformation in 1947. The _Schwäbisches Tagblatt_ featured two articles in 1947 with nearly the same title; the first in January was titled “Germany between East and West,” and the second in May was titled “Between East and West.”219 The earlier article emphasized ethnicity, culture, and the French in its discussion of Germany as the crossroads of Europe. The _Tagblatt_ wrote, “[Germany’s] immediate neighbors are the Slavs in the East under the leadership of the Russians, in west the French (with the Belgians and Hollanders). On top of that, American, English, Russian and French occupations stand on their own ground.”220 This passage reflects how the division of Germany was imagined in early 1947: the French and the ‘Russians’ were their primary influences. Moreover, the four occupation zones

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218 Ibid.
were addressed independently, ostensibly “standing their own ground.”

This differed from the dominant discourse of the next two years.

The second article, written by Nikolaus Koch – the first article listed no author – was more representative of the Cold War mindset, even though it was written only months later. The United States became the focal point of the West rather than France, and ‘Bolshevism’ was emphasized over ethnicity – though racism toward the Soviet Union certainly continued into the Cold War, alternately labeling Russians ‘Slavic’ or ‘Asiatic.’ Koch’s essay opened with a quote from a letter to the *Tagblatt*, “If we do not truly solve the opposition between the Occident [*Abendland*] and Bolshevik Russia, we have squandered our last and, perhaps, our greatest chance, and will be meaningless as a people and be not unified whatsoever.”

Koch, in his own words, then wrote, “The opposition between the West, which is represented by the USA in terms of power, and the East, which for us today is Bolshevik Russia, must be solved.” We can see from these excerpts that fears of war between the US and USSR were beginning to surface in the FBZ, and that these fears were beginning to eclipse talk of ‘a synthesis of God and world.’

The French were beginning to fade from prominence and influence – which was significant in their own occupation zone, still mostly closed to inter-zonal traffic and therefore largely absent of other Allied forces. In other words, the conversation was no longer about the French administrators and their cultural programs, but concern about “Bolshevik Russia.” The French had become an equal, an ally in the conflict with the

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221 Ibid.
223 Ibid.
Soviet Union rather than a paternalistic occupier. French dependence on the United States further equalized their power and prestige with that of West Germany.

If politics were beginning to overshadow cultural rejuvenation, how was Christianity discussed? Koch’s article is beneficial for observing this process as well. He wrote:

We must solve the confessional problem because its solution is the requirement that, without the fulfillment of which, Christianity and its Occident will become no true factor. Moreover, we want to overcome the moralistic and indignant incapability with which the Christians stand helpless opposite [the whole] Marx and Marxism. It is also necessary to make the Occident fertile once again.²²⁴

This excerpt shows the new dichotomy between Christianity and Marxism – both of which had been, until recently, in opposition primarily to National Socialism instead. The time frame of the discussion also shifted; rather than focusing on the Nazi past and the rehabilitation of the German Volk, the press began to discuss and prophetically allude to the future conflict with the atheistic communists. Christianity was transformed from being the source of truth and identity for Germany to being a weapon with which to fight communism. In other words, political ideology returned to prominence in German culture and, while it didn’t completely overshadow religion, became the lens through which the world was explained once again. ‘Good versus evil’ was now recast as ‘West versus East’ in a real world with real potential danger, as opposed to the spiritual realm. It was as though Germans in the FBZ had finally overcome their aversion to the very idea of ideology, and could once again embrace a political system.

²²⁴ Ibid.
Nazism certainly did not disappear as a political tool in the Cold War, but
developed a different relationship with regard to West and East.\textsuperscript{225} Rather than
functioning as a ‘binary,’ Cold War polarization in Germany was more triangular in
form, with each side seeing itself as antithetical to both the others simultaneously. In one
corner were the Western values – Christianity, conservative republicanism, and
capitalism. In the second corner, communism’s supposed socioeconomic egalitarianism,
atheism and supranationalism. Finally, Nazism was in the third corner with
totalitarianism, capitalism, nationalism and racism – but this was always a more complex
legacy, since both West and East Germans downplayed their similarities with the Hitler
regime and emphasized their differences. From the perspective of West and East, in this
model, it was commonplace during the Cold War to make antithetical claims concerning
their respective associations with the other two systems. In reality, conceiving of political
systems in such black-and-white terms was idealized and overly simplistic – a byproduct
of the Cold War binary. For their virtues and flaws, both communist and capitalist were
both essentially different from Nazism. Yet, it is important, in the context of postwar
German society, to recognize that the Cold War ‘binary’ had another pole – the phantom
of National Socialism.

This manipulation of Nazism – and debate over its modern antithesis – in the
rhetoric of the press continued through 1949. For example, a brief article in the \textit{Badische
Zeitung} – following the implementation of the new federal constitution in Bonn in May
1949 – paraphrased a comment Charles de Gaulle made in regard to the legacy of
Nazism. The \textit{Badische} wrote:

\textsuperscript{225} Herf, \textit{Divided Memory}, pp. 1-12.
The question is now on which side the Reich stands, whether it will align itself to the East or the West. In each case the basic tendencies of the Reich will persist, not to acknowledge the resulting status quo which followed the defeat. On this there is only a hope of the prospect for a new solution to the German problem and, above all, to focus on that perhaps one day the French people and German people may come into an understanding [with one another].²²⁶

This article expressed the sentiment – whether or not it was de Gaulle’s intention – that the Nazi regime would have a natural inheritor in the new Cold War, that its ideas would gravitate to West or East. The Soviet Union was the side on which the press saw this trend developing. To make the West seem humanitarian, the next sentence expressed the hope that one day, ‘above all,’ the peoples of France and Germany could come to peace with one another.²²⁷ This passage shows the new identity of the early Federal Republic: the Soviet Union represented evil and the continuation of the Nazi culture. With these rationalizations, Germans could downplay their role in Hitler’s crimes because they felt the communists in the East now carried the totalitarian torch.

The mobilization of ideology in Adenauer’s Christian West Germany was clear in an article Die Rheinpfalz in April 1949. The article was written by Hans Haberer – a minister in President of Rhineland-Palatinate Peter Altmeier’s cabinet – in response to both political and religious events. Titled “The Turning Point to Life,” the article equates the realization of West German democracy to the Christian holiday Easter, a similar idea to the previously discussed spiritual Stunde Null – except Haberer counterbalanced spirituality with politics. He wrote, “The great German goal stands in the focal point of the thing [Dinge] upon which each will [Wille] must climb. The Basic Law and the occupation statute, shifting in effect, must be cornerstones of progress if Easter 1949 is to

²²⁷ Ibid.
bring about this great and decisive transition.” Haberer, as a CDU politician, saw the similarity between Christianity and German democracy not only as self-evident truth, but an essential for ‘progress,’ which Germans needed to embrace.

The idea of the ‘shifting’ rule of administrators from the French occupation apparatus to the Federal Republic bridged the gap between occupation and autonomy. So did the FBZ, and West Germany as a whole, succeed in creating a ‘synthesis of God and World?’ Or were their initial ideas compromised, and their idealism therefore ‘unfulfilled,’ as this thesis proposes? These questions will be explored in the final section.

4.2. Reflections ‘Before New Tasks’

Answering what was forgotten and unfulfilled in the French Occupation Zone in the second half of the 1940s is revealing not only for the German process of Vergangenheitsbewältigung, but that of the French occupiers as well. A Germany open to discussion over the past seems to have only existed in the FBZ for a period of roughly two years after the war. The uniqueness of the FBZ was discussed in the introduction; a near dearth of ethnic German refugees, emphasis on civilian administration, and extensive reeducation programs characterized occupation. The effects of French occupation policy confusion were felt by the local populations; fear and resentment of the occupiers existed alongside mutual pain and hope for the future. Though French

administrators were somewhat representative of Parisian politics, it is useful also to remember what was occurring at home.

France was creating its own narrative for the Nazi era, except theirs was based on the assumption that the entire nation had been resistance. The fact that, in reality, there were skeletons in the closets of both occupiers and Germans in the FBZ makes its social history all the more noteworthy. The willingness of the occupation administrators to let the German press blame its own people totally for the crimes of the Nazi era had clear enough motivations; what else does this say about both parties, however? France became a nation of the righteous while Germany was the ‘pariah nation,’ as Karl Jaspers wrote – a nation of sinners. In other words, the collective guilt that described former Nazis paralleled the collective innocence of the French.

Without studies and surveys equivalent to those collected in the other occupation zones, there is less direct evidence with which to characterize Germans in the FBZ – it is clear that there were a diversity of opinions, however. This project intends nonetheless to present a social consensus. Rather than bottom-up – considering diaries, letters and other private expressions – or top-down – looking at the way official policy played out in the FBZ – this thesis seeks a mid-level approach. The words of the press constitute a unique role as a historical source; these journalists both influenced average Germans ‘below’ them and affected French policy ‘above’ them. While the German press in the FBZ reflected certain elements of Allied occupation policy – especially the status of churches in society – it often conflicted with the theory that heavy press censorship

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231 For studies conducted in the American Zone, see David Rodnick, *Postwar Germans, an Anthropologist’s Account* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948) and Anna J. and Richard L. Merritt, *Public opinion in occupied Germany*. 
prevailed. Therefore, these newspapers are beneficial both because of their readership and their independence from various powers above.

Certain aspects of the French approach to occupation transferred into the Cold War, such as the intention to create an innocuous Germany. This took form, for instance, in the symbolic decision to place the new capital of West Germany in Bonn – a relatively small spa town closer to Belgium than the Democratic Republic. The capital of the FBZ had been Baden-Baden, similarly a small spa town with luxury to boast rather than military strategic importance. The American choice of Frankfurt am Main (which eventually became the capital of Bizonia as well) was largely due to the fact that, as General Dwight D. Eisenhower’s headquarters, much of the military administration was already present; the alternative would have been at OMGUS headquarters in the American sector in Berlin. Therefore, the French rationale that a Germany governed from a quiet, peaceful town would make no future threats to European peace did eventually take root in Western thinking. However, there was another side to the marionette-like treatment of West Germans after 1949 that was totally dissimilar from the French approach in 1945.

The Western bloc – led by the Anglo-Americans – needed West Germany as a solid partner in the war of ideologies. That they constituted virtually no military threat was precisely the point. The portrayal of the Federal Republic as the heir of German anti-fascism, as opposed to totalitarianism in the East, brought with it the decline of the confrontation of the Nazi past. Denazification, therefore, was officially abandoned in the

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Bizone in 1949 because, on top of the failure to purge a significant number of former party members, it delegitimized the West German government. While the French approach to the process may have mimicked American planning on paper, the implementation was quite different.\textsuperscript{233} By early 1946 they had already turned much control of denazification to Germans and were referring to the process as ‘purification’ (\textit{épuration}) rather than denazification.\textsuperscript{234} The French believed that the stain of Nazism was set too deeply in the fabric of German society, and only reeducation could make over their culture. In contrast, the Americans believed, initially, that they could simply extract elements of Nazism from German society.\textsuperscript{235} The cultural outcomes of the early French approach are evident in the local newspapers; its denouement is also clear, suggesting that the German confrontation of the past suffered mostly from Cold War politics.

To what degree, then, did the Cold War singlehandedly terminate the extreme spirituality characteristic of early German society in the FBZ? Since the Cold War seemed to take root in society at precisely the moment when religious rhetoric began, to a degree, to decline, this question is unknowable. One likelihood is that the decline of spirituality would have continued. In other words, German society had sought refuge in the chaos of the early postwar era, but many may have reverted to nothing more than Sunday churchgoers after their fears had subsided. To argue, on the other hand, that Western society may have again cemented a tight bond between church and state is not completely unfounded. Nonetheless, the timing of the rise of the Cold War is the only

\textsuperscript{233} Willis, \textit{The French in Germany}, pp. 147-157.
\textsuperscript{235} Willis, \textit{The French in Germany}, p. 147.
tangible factor we have for explaining the decline of widespread religiosity in German society in the FBZ.

The reality was, of course, that Christianity did not disappear in Germany, but became politicized, as discussed earlier in this chapter. The Christian Democratic Union became the most powerful party during the Adenauer era, which suggests, on the one hand, that religion continued to be a powerful symbol. This does not mean, on the other hand, that religion remained as an important an undercurrent in the German worldview as in 1945. The takeaway of this thesis is not that the FBZ represented a ‘happy ending’ to the Nazi era – no occupation could have made up for the burden of responsibility for the preceding years. Nor should the French be regarded as saints. This research does suggest, however, that there were many more forces at play in German society in the FBZ than previously recognized. Confrontation of war guilt was discussed in religious terms – not political – and in a fashion to which German elites would return decades later, with an acceptance of collective guilt. Therefore, this is the beginning of an exploration of what was forgotten and unfulfilled in the French Occupation Zone, in hopes of provoking further investigation.

These newspapers indicate that underneath elaborate religious allusions, and beyond the desire to evade punishment for war crimes, something more psychological was occurring. The first years after World War II represent an attempt by Germans to live in a future without regret, secrets, and guilt – paradoxically by ‘accepting’ that guilt. For the large part, they accomplished this, or at least felt they had, which explains the period of relative quietude about the past in the 1950s and into the 1960s. However, as the next generation began to peel off the layers of memory, it became clear that the former Nazis
would not be able to remain in their society of bliss. With the coming of new and different war crimes trials in the first half of the 1960s, and social upheaval in the latter, it became clear that misery and pain would forever underlay memory of the Nazi era. The attempt to cut into this emotional core, as into Günter Grass’s onion, proved impossible, and only decades after the war would Germans realize that mastering the past was not so easily done.
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