

The Change of Economic Elites in Germany and Nazi-Occupied Countries after World War II

Bochum February 19 and 20, 2009

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In all German-occupied countries in Europe, liberation was followed by the persecution of collaborators. The effects of this on the economic sector were threefold:

a) Legislative sanctions

In order to prosecute war crimes, laws and regulations were passed. These were aimed at providing legal sanctions to punish criminal offences as well as crimes against humanity, for instance, in the context of the use of forced labour.

b) Career-related sanctions

Obvious collaboration was sanctioned in professional life either by a change of position to a less politically sensitive one within a company, downgrading to a lower rank, the assignment of unskilled labour were frequently used as a means of penalisation; or the relocation to a different place, a different company or to a different branch; or the dismissal of executives, which was decided upon more often than it was enacted.

c) Sanctions on business

In some countries, businesses which had enriched themselves in the wartime economy, faced sanctions like the freezing of accounts, confiscation of illicit profits or imposition of retrospective higher taxes. Sometimes the argument was taken further and used to legitimate sequestration, not infrequently leading to expropriation.

Not only collaborators and perpetrators are to be discussed, but also the people and institutions who were part of the denazification process. Commissions and committees formed spontaneously in many countries which took responsibility for sanctions, for instance, the commissions for denazification in the GDR or the *comités d'épuration* in France. In many cases auxiliaries to the National Socialist regime took self-regulating measures. Partly voluntarily, partly for fear of punishment, executives resigned from their leading positions, chose early retirement or moved to another part of the country. In the case of the Soviet-occupied zone of Germany, this often meant a flight to the West, whereas German citizens, who had moved to Austria after 1938, returned to the Federal Republic of Germany. Legally sanctioned offences were dealt with by specific institutions for prosecution or by the reconstituted courts of law and police forces. The process was often supervised by the Allied forces or the Soviet Union as the new hegemonic power in Eastern Europe.

In the countries governed by socialist or communist parties in the post-war years, important branches of the industry were nationalised by sequestration. This is an important issue in the countries of Eastern Europe, which can be contrasted with the development in the West. However, efforts at nationalisation also existed in Western Europe, mainly aimed at sectors considered of national interest, in an attempt to

control them economically or because of their great strategic value for the national economy as a whole.

The process discussed entailed a replacement of economic elites, which required availability of replacements. Especially in the nationalised economic sectors, the new government could exert influence on the selection. For France, the problem of the ensuing collective rise in rank of technocrats has been discussed. In the planned economies of the East, the political influence by the governing parties will be of greater significance, but even those countries could not fill all leading positions with loyal party members. It can be argued, that compromises dominated the selection of replacements. It is clear, still, that matters of political opportunism were relevant as well as the consideration of professional qualification.

Questions to be discussed include but are not limited to:

- How can the change of economic elites be measured qualitatively and quantitatively, e.g. for a specific region, branch or economic sector?
- To what degree was the persecution of collaborators influenced by external forces such as the Allies or the Soviet Union?
- What characterises the careers of specific groups of managers? To what degree were planned sanctions implemented?
- Which problems arose from the replacement of the economic elite?
- Which consequences did sequestration, nationalisation and the change of elites have on the performance of companies or economic sectors?

Programme

Thursday, February 19

14.30 Welcome session

15.00 Dieter Ziegler (Bochum)

Introduction paper

Session 1: Germany and Austria

15.20 Ralf Ahrens (Potsdam)

Bankers and Occupiers: Continuity and Change in the Personnel of German Big Banks after World War II

15.40 Marcel Boldorf (Bochum)

Denazification and the Change of Business Elites in the German Democratic Republic

16.00 Discussion of the papers

16.30 Coffee break

17.00 Wolfgang Weber (Bregenz)

From Nazification to Denazification: Austrian Business Elites, 1938–1948

Session 2: Western and Southern Europe

17.20 Dominique Barjot (Paris)

The Purge of the French Economic Elites after the Second World War

17.40 Discussion of the papers

18.00 General Discussion: Denazification vs. Political Purge: Differences and Similarities

20.00 Common dinner at the Restaurant of the Fiege brewery, Bochum

Friday, February 20

Session 2 (continued): Western and Southern Europe

9.00 Florent Le Bot (Paris)

The post-war Purge in France and the Confiscation of “Illicit Profits”,
1944–1960s

9.20 Rolf Petri (Venice)

Miraculous Economy, Enduring Elite. The Case of Post-War Italy, 1948–1960

9.40 Michela Ponzani (Florence)

The Legal Purge of Economic Elites in Post-War Italy. Activities of anti-fascist Commissions and Extraordinary Courts of Assize, 1945-1947

10.00 Discussion of Session 2: The Cases of France and Italy

10.30 Coffee break

Session 3: Northern and Northwestern Europe

11.00 Steen Andersen (Copenhagen)

The juridical settlement that tumbled before it got started – Denmark and the persecution of collaborators

11.20 Dirk Luyten (Brussels)

Purge and Economic Elite Change in Belgium after 1944: A Matter of Legitimacy rather than Power

11.40 Discussion of the papers

12.10 Lunch Break

12.30 Common lunch at Tucholsky Restaurant, Bochum

Session 3 (continued): Northern and Northwestern Europe

14.00 Ben Wubs (Utrecht)

Unilever's Post-war Purges

14.20 Wouter Veraart (Amsterdam)

The Downfall of the Schichs. Controversies around enemy property in Europe after World War II

14.40 Short Discussion of the papers

15.00 Discussion of Session 3: Post-war Purge and Entrepreneurs

15.30 Coffee break

Session 4: Eastern Europe

16.00 Jaromír Balcar (Bremen)

The Struggle for the Factories. Factory Councils, National Administration and Trade Unions in Czechoslovakia between Liberation and Nationalization

16.20 Dagmara Jajeśniak-Quast (Erfurt)

Between the Continuity and Discontinuity of Economic Experts During Socialist Industrialization in Poland. The Example of Iron and Steel Industries

16.40 Žarko Lazarević (Ljubljana)

Replacement of Economic Elites in Slovenia after World War II

17.00 Discussion of Session 4: Post-war Purge under Communist Rule

17.30 General discussion

18.00 Final announcements

Saturday, February 21

9.30 Visit of the Deutsches Bergbau Museum