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The Future of German-American Relations

Ulrich Weisser

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ments [including a failed attempt on General Edwin A. Walker's life]"; and lastly, a "need to be noticed." And while it may be hard for some to swallow "that the most important political figure in the world . . . died merely . . . of a family quarrel," the *Report of the Warren Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy* notes that on the morning of the murder, Oswald "for the first time left his wedding ring . . . on the dresser . . . [and] took . . . [a] long brown package . . . to the School Book Depository."

JOHN C. THOMPSON
LaGrange, Georgia

The Future of German-American Relations. Washington, D.C.: International Security Council, 1987. 207pp. \$4.95

The Federal Republic of Germany and the United States now find themselves in transit to a better balanced and mature partnership where rights and duties are more evenly distributed. This development takes place at a time when the Germans have become aware of the far-reaching consequences of the U.S.-Soviet Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) to their vulnerable and exposed country located in the heart of Europe; namely, the concentration of the remaining nuclear short-range weapons on German soil. The dominate question for Germany in light of the changing strategic conditions is, can a community of equally shared risks between

Europe and the United States, in which nuclear weapons play a role acceptable to the protectors and the protected, be maintained? The Americans, emphasizing a different issue, expect Germany to carry a fair share of the common defense burden—both inside and outside the NATO Treaty area—utilizing its considerable economic power as well as defense resources.

The International Security Council (ISC)—an independent, voluntary association for statesmen, senior officers, diplomats, scientists, and historians—deserves credit for the creation of a forum that provides the frank and intense exchange of ideas on those issues that are key to German-American relations. The symposium was held in June 1987 in Berlin, the divided city in the center of Europe, and the key to the necessary distinction between the freedom of the West and captivity of the East.

The ISC has published these worthy contributions to the Berlin conference, which provide an American and a German perspective on those catchwords defining the present debate: strategy and arms control, defense and deterrence, neutrality and reunification, cooperation and competition. Since the overwhelming number of speakers were outspoken right-wingers, and no liberals or socialists were represented, the views remain somewhat simplistic and unbalanced. This permits a misleading impression of the German domestic debate.

A good example of the imbalanced views reflected by the speakers is the fact that there appears to be a common denominator among the majority of the contributors that arms control agreements "would discourage, not encourage, modernization and defense programs in the West: rather than leading to necessary improvements, they would more likely stifle them, thereby magnifying and making more dangerous the many other unbalances that favor the Soviet Union."

It is certainly in the interest of a more sober and strategically oriented view towards arms control to balance the present arms control fever and the public euphoria. It does not help, however, to define arms control as a process which leads to the "Destruction of the Alliance."

The present generation of American politicians have less experience and are less knowledgeable about European affairs, in particular about complex issues such as the "German question," which often results in superficial views and disturbing statements. Thus, the importance of a comprehensive and informative overview such as the ISC publication—a collection of facts and arguments which describes most accurately the state-of-the-art discussion about a political perspective for the divided Germany.

All in all, the study shows that NATO was founded under conditions different than those it currently faces and will face in the future. The German-American relationship has a

sound basis of shared values and interests: this relationship, however, needs an emotional and political boost in order to stay as healthy in the nineties as it has been in past decades.

ULRICH WEISSER
Captain, Federal German Navy

Johnson, Robert Erwin. *Guardians of the Sea: History of the United States Coast Guard, 1915 to the Present*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1987. 368pp. \$23.95

Coast Guardsmen, like all military folk, are fond of their traditions, and there are doubtless few in uniform or out who would not know that the service traces its lineage to the year 1790 when the 1st Congress authorized the construction of ten "cutters" to enforce the customs of the new republic. Probably fewer are aware of the significance of the year 1915, but it was then that the modern Coast Guard was created through a merger of two Treasury Department agencies: the Revenue-Cutter Service and the Life-Saving Service.

Ironically, the 1915 merger resulted from a report by a "President's Commission on Economy and Efficiency" which recommended that the Revenue Cutter-Service be abolished and its functions transferred to the Navy, and that the Life-Saving Service be transferred to the new Department of Commerce and Labor. There would be further mergers and transfers in the years to