

# Preface



“At least you are off the street!” I heard this undoubtedly sarcastic remark numerous times when talking to my dad in Germany while being in graduate school here in the United States. As a phrase now part of many family conversations it speaks to the continuing support and interest of my parents in my work and doings (thank you for that!); but it also alludes to a much larger discourse regarding widespread perceptions of youth: lingering, loitering, and smoking youngsters standing on street corners wasting time. To think about such attitudes, to hear widespread understandings of youth and reflect on its history, all of that reminded me that youth remains only an access point into much broader conversations around law and order, appropriate behaviors, and societal norms.

I had stumbled upon such discussions surrounding youth in the immediate post–World War II period on a snowy winter day in Northern Arizona. I had spent much time looking through newspapers on microfilm in the library, namely consulting *Die Süddeutsche Zeitung*, the only major publication I could access for Bavaria. At the time I was interested in complexities surrounding denazification and re-education. One headline from September 1946, however, caught my attention and eventually shifted my focus towards discussing images of youth in Munich. It read, “Bavarian Problems: Youth–Food–Export.” I wondered, how could the state of youth be as important as economic recovery and access to food?

To try answering this question became an incredible journey, one I could only complete due to the assistance and kindness of many along the way. My original interest fell on fertile ground within and outside academia, as many encouraged me to pursue this study early on. Friends and colleagues alike looked at early ideas, drafts, and conference papers, thus helping this project to move forward. I had the

luxury to dedicate much time to this study based on funding from my home institution and several grants. Yet I am also fortunate to have friends and family in Germany, kind enough to open their doors and homes. Such helpfulness allowed me to afford long research stays in Munich while living in comfortable and welcoming environments. The latter was vital because completing any scholarly project can become a rather lonely endeavor. The actual research process relied on the help of many individuals, including archivists and their patience when answering endless questions. I experienced many moments of such kindness, at times from complete strangers: people sat down with me for several hours to share their stories about growing up in Munich, others simply forwarded me a whole set of primary documents prior to being available elsewhere. One gentleman happily greeted me each morning as I made my way into the reading room of the *Hauptstaatsarchiv* archive in Munich for yet another day of research. In the United States I could build on the help of my dissertation advisors and readers, their suggestions and critiques. Later the questions of students helped me rethink elements of my work, or reminded me about the importance of my study overall. Throughout all of this time the patience and kindness of my ever-supporting wife was vital: without her support and continuing encouragement this book would simply not exist. Then there were numerous readers, the comments of anonymous reviewers, and the help of editors at Berghahn Books that eventually helped me turn a potentially promising manuscript into a coherent publication. As I write this, that journey comes to a conclusion, and I thus look back at numerous open doors and arms of both friends and strangers, many of them simply intrigued by the research, all of them young at one point, and kind enough to share their knowledge and advice, or time and homes. Thank you for such help, support, memories, and stories, and for giving me the opportunity to complete research meant to shed new light onto images of youth as Munich came of age.

Martin Kalb  
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