

‘Reorientation should be our principal justification and objective’:

The Rockefeller Foundation and the Reeducation of Germany and Japan,

1945-1950¹

The postwar occupations of Germany and Japan are a reflection of the American diagnosis of the German and Japanese “problem” as presented in the form of National Socialism in Germany and Ultrationalism in Japan. Once decided upon their diagnosis planners discussed a prognosis for the democratic future of these two totalitarian nations and thus began the search for a lasting “cure” to the German and Japanese “sickness.” The bitter pill that had to be swallowed was a good dose of re-education. The focus of this paper is the Rockefeller Foundation’s relationship to American plans for re-education as a model for the postwar development of Germany and Japan. This model was to provide the “cure” for past German and Japanese ills. It had a great deal to do with image and perception of these two nations but was also inextricably linked to ideas of America’s own democracy. In this context this paper discusses the suitability of American-style democracy for export.

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