

The Rise and Fall of Comradeship

Hitler's Soldiers, Male Bonding and Mass Violence in the Twentieth Century

Thomas Kühne

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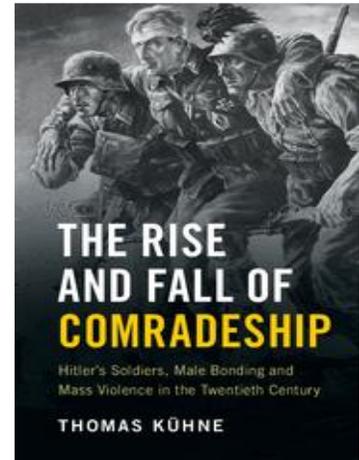
This is an innovative account of how the concept of comradeship shaped the actions, emotions and ideas of ordinary German soldiers across the two world wars and during the Holocaust. Using individual soldiers' diaries, personal letters and memoirs, Kühne reveals the ways in which soldiers' longing for community, and the practice of male bonding and togetherness, sustained the Third Reich's pursuit of war and genocide. Comradeship fueled the soldiers' fighting morale. It also propelled these soldiers forward into war crimes and acts of mass murders. Yet, by practicing comradeship, the soldiers could maintain the myth that they were morally sacrosanct. Post-1945, the notion of *kameradschaft* as the epitome of humane and egalitarian solidarity allowed Hitler's soldiers to join the euphoria for peace and democracy in the Federal Republic, finally shaping popular memories of the war through the end of the twentieth century.

Acknowledgements; Introduction: a concept from a different world; Part I. The Myth of Comradeship, 1914-1939: 1. Healing; 2. Coalescence; 3. Stealing; Part II. The Practice of Comradeship, 1939-1945: 4. Assimilation; 5. Megalomania; 6. Nemesis; Part III. The Decline of Comradeship: 7. Privatisation; 8. Integration; 9. Demonisation; Conclusion: protean masculinity and Germany's twentieth century; Index.

Reviews

"War is a powerful generator of solidarity. Thomas Kühne explores the rise and decline of the German version of this phenomenon, Kameradschaft. It was a myth that was lived in World War II and came to shape male identity into the late twentieth century. How, why and with what consequences this happened is the subject of this powerful exploration".

-Michael Geyer, University of Chicago



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"An original, comprehensive, and incisive analysis of the concept, myth, reality, and ultimate disintegration of soldiers' comradeship in modern Germany and its profound implications for the manner in which German men imagined war, perpetrated violence, and for long managed to avoid coming to terms with their complicity in the crimes of the Nazi regime. Set within the larger context of European and American ideas and practices of military cohesion, this is an important book that should be read by all students of modern and military history".

-Omer Bartov, Brown University

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