CHAPTER SEVEN

OBSEOLESCENCE, RENEWAL, AND TRANSCENDENCE:
THE LANDPOLIZEI AND SUBURBANIZATION

In an article he wrote in 1960, Fritz Stauß, the Landpolizei chief of Upper Bavaria, painted a troubling picture of the preceding half-decade as West German society was leaving the immediate postwar years of crisis behind and entering a period of growing prosperity:

The unexpected economic upswing in the Federal Republic has led to completely new ways of living … The new style of life is characterized by the concepts of motorization and technification. Rising incomes allow wide circles of the population access to the achievements of technology … The deliberately paraded prosperity, an often conscienceless leisure industry, the thoughtlessness of the successful and their public glorification have awakened in many of the “unsuccessful” the wish for a comfortable life under any circumstances.¹

Stauß reported that crime born out of misery and crisis (Elendskriminalität) had been gradually replaced by the “criminality of prosperity” (Wohlstandskriminalität). He pointed to some of the trends in a changing Bavaria that had led to new threats to safety and security: increased leisure time for most of the population, a spoiled generation of youth who were exposed to increasingly pervasive moral corruption outside the home, and the growth of white-collar crime in an increasingly competitive and unregulated economy.²

¹ Fritz Stauß, “Polizei und Wirtschaftswunder,” Bayerische Landpolizei (1960/1961): 10, 19. The word that I have translated as “technification” appears as Technisierung in the German original. “Technologization,” a perhaps more elegant English word, would more closely correspond to Technologisierung in German. Both German words exist in semi-regular use, but English seems to favor “technologization” overwhelmingly over “technification,” which originated as a back-formation from Spanish tecnificación. I use “technification” here to convey the somewhat pejorative sense of the shorter Technisierung as used in the Stauß citation.

² Ibid. Predictably, this article traced the sources of the pattern in which “zunehmend Angehörige der gehobeneren Gesellschaftsschichten kriminell geworden” to “Der aus Amerika stammende Begriff ‘Weisse-Kragen-Kriminalität,’” which “ist inzwischen in Europa und leider besonders in der Bundesrepublik in Erscheinung getreten.”
Moralizing about the pernicious effects on public behavior of this new prosperity was part of a more general sense of frustration in the Landpolizei as the Adenauer period drew to a close. Ultimately, however, framing the deterioration of the population’s values in moral terms did not ensure success for attempts to maintain the old paternalistic police responsibilities for the guidance (Betreuung) and education (Erziehung) of people’s behavior. The larger problem was that by the later 1950s, a set of social, demographic, and economic developments that had followed in the wake of recovery were making rural Bavaria increasingly difficult to police in the traditional neo-authoritarian style of the first postwar decade of crisis.

While the Landpolizei had been doing its part to define the conservative “no experiments” character of the early Adenauer period on the renovated stage of Bavarian small-town and country life, restabilization of the rural milieu in something approximating its traditional prewar form proved to be short-lived. The changes that Stauß and others among the police leadership took such a jaundiced view of were part of a complex process in the middle 1950s through which rural Bavaria was joining the rest of Germany in a structural transition to the mobile consumer society that has characterized this part of Western Europe ever since. Toward the end of the 1950s, even the quiet country lanes and self-contained market towns still patrolled on foot by small local Landpolizei detachments were facing accelerating waves of material and social change as a result of the West German recovery. New modes of behavior, new ways of relating to authority, and the accelerated tempo of material life were signaling a gradual farewell to the restabilized “world of yesterday” or “long 1930s” that some scholars have identified as a hallmark of public life in western Germany until far into the 1950s. Perhaps more abruptly in Bavaria than else-

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4 For useful if somewhat conservatively biased contemporary reflections on this topic in the German context, see Günther Pacyna, Bauernum im Umbruch der Zeit (Hannover: Landbuch, 1966).

5 For a discussion of the “long 1930s” thesis and of rural change in this period, see Josef Mooser, “Kommentar,” in Frese and Prinz, Politische Zäsuren und gesellschaftlicher