

DER FRAGEBOGEN (THE QUESTIONNAIRE)
(ERNST VON SALOMON)

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Ernst von Salomon's *Der Fragebogen* is unique, a product of the refiner's fire, a work forged in the cataclysm of mid-twentieth-century Europe. But this once-famous, now-obscure book, published only one time in English, and that seventy years ago, still holds within its pages knowledge about both the past and the future. As to the past, from this book we can learn something completely missing from modern discourse—the complex views of 1930s and 1940s German patriots. As to the future, we can learn something more practical—methods to, in a future dispensation, help us flush Left poison completely and permanently from our body politic.

Von Salomon, who lived from 1902 to 1972, was the very model of a Prussian patriot—at least in his own mind, although one cannot always tell how reliable a narrator he is, either here or in his earlier book *The Outlaws*, about political chaos and violence in and around Germany after World War I. We can, however, take his stated views as representative of the Prussian type as it existed during the first half of the twentieth century. This book, *The Questionnaire* (*Der Fragebogen* in German, and published in 1951 in Germany), is an autobiography of von Salomon's life from 1928 until 1946. Von Salomon, a clever man if there ever was one, framed his autobiography as answers to the questionnaire, composed of 131 expansive questions, forced by the victorious Allies upon millions of Germans known or suspected to be associated in some way with the National Socialists.

While as I say there is much to be learned here, this book is not an easy read. Oh, the translation seems competent enough, although bizarrely the dust jacket and the preface heap obloquy upon the author, so perhaps the translation was also slanted to help discredit the book. You may well ask, then, why would a major American publishing house, Doubleday, in 1955 publish a book whose message, and whose author, they despised? Because this was the bestselling book in Germany for a decade, and could not be ignored.

Yet it's rough sledding. First, the book is not chronological; because it is framed as answers to questions on various topics, it skips and jumps

around in time and place, and more than once views the same events from a different angle—while it usually omits dates. Second, and more importantly, the author assumes vastly greater background knowledge than nearly any American alive today has. People and events completely obscure are referred to as common knowledge, and knowing who they are and what they did is necessary to understand the point the author is making. Many of these people and events don't even have a stub English-language Wikipedia article; most have German-language articles of some type, and between my own very rough German and translation aids, I can puzzle out the relevant facts. Still, it's an uphill battle.

This opacity extends to von Salomon himself. For example, a major character throughout the book is his lover Ille, who was Jewish and whom he passed off as his wife (and whom he portrays as slightly dotty and naïve). Wikipedia will tell you her last name was Gotthelft, and she was later married to the film director and screenwriter Paul May. But it's nearly impossible for the reader to figure out anything else about her, or her history with von Salomon. He never introduces her or explains anything about her. The internet is little help. There is some suggestion she was his mistress and that he was actually married to someone else during the war. When von Salomon died, he was listed in his *New York Times* obituary as being married to “the former Lena Falk” and having three daughters—but the Hamburg film producer Cassian von Salomon, born in 1956, is also his son, so who was his mother? I just can't find out. I guess it doesn't matter, because the book is about von Salomon's, and by extension all patriotic Germans', experiences during the war, not his family. Still, the reader doesn't know what he doesn't know, and wonders what he's missing.

I emphasize “patriotic German” because the pernicious myth has grown up that citizens of Axis countries during World War II who betrayed their countries to the Allies, in one way or another, were somehow the “true patriots.” This is certainly not generally true, quite the contrary—many, or most, of those people were just Communist traitors deserving of contempt and punishment. But this is actually a complicated matter, because it intersects with the question of legitimate rebellion against tyranny, something I wholeheartedly endorse (subject to certain rules). Or as Ernst Jünger said in a recently-translated 1992 interview, “I know to distinguish between high treason—the agreement

with an enemy power during a war—and treason as betrayal of a form of government. This distinction raises delicate problems that have troubled thinkers from Machiavelli to Jacob Burckhardt and caused tragic conflicts for many militaries from Coriolan to Stauffenberg.” Maybe we will return to this topic another day.

For seventy years, very little in English was published about the Questionnaire. I bought this book some years ago, for the purpose of seeing what it could tell me about how I and my compatriots might, after the Left is defeated, root out their evil as the Allies sought out to root out the very similar, but far less successful, evil of National Socialism. A few other old books exist about the Allies’ denazification campaign, but not many. As it happens, however, in 2016, in an unpublished doctoral thesis that has been turned into a book being published later this year, a German scholar, William Mikkel Dack, added a good deal of detail about how the Questionnaire worked in practice, which helps elaborate (but does not contradict) von Salomon’s account. As far as I know, he is the only modern scholar focusing on matters relating to denazification, at least in English. If you want more detail, go to Dack’s work—especially because von Salomon’s book now costs several hundred dollars, in keeping with the explosive rise in used book prices generally. (In that, as in so much else, this is not the future I was promised.)

Who filled out the Questionnaire? It’s very hard to say precisely, because although the completed forms are mostly still available to read in their millions, central administration was haphazard, and different across the different occupied zones. Roughly, the Allies required it of anyone who wanted to work in any job that had any responsibility, public or private. In other words, if you wanted to eat, and your family to eat, in those days of extreme privation and actual starvation, you filled it out—and accurately, for throughout the document are dire threats of punishment for the slightest inaccuracy. (Dack says about twenty million Germans completed the form.) The Allies’ aim, however, wasn’t primarily punishment (though they hoped to, and did, identify some Germans who were then punished), but rather excluding “undesirables,” meaning committed National Socialists, from future positions of influence in the new Germany, while at the same time changing the psychology of the German nation.

Jarringly, to that last point, Dack is explicit that the much of the Allies' plan for denazification was designed by the Frankfurt School architects of "neo-Marxist Critical Theory," notably Herbert Marcuse, but also Franz Neumann and Otto Kirchheimer. These were men of the extreme Left, who brought their poison in the 1950s to America, where it has resulted in enormous destruction and now governs all Left political action. Their denazification theories revolved around the supposed false consciousness imposed on the German people by an evil cabal, and, no surprise, their purpose in designing all of denazification, entirely open and explicit, was to ensure the permanent dominance in Germany of the Left. (Their core attitude can be seen in, for example, the Questionnaire's repeated attempts to encourage and incentivize denunciation of family members, always a favorite tool of the Left, which hates nothing more than the family.)

Von Salomon was a conspirator in the 1922 assassination of Walter von Rathenau, foreign minister in Weimar Germany. He covers this, and the aftermath, including five years in prison, in *The Outlaws*. This book covers only the time after he got out of prison, although more than once he, with a tone between irony and regret, but never with a tone of apology, mentions the assassination and its aftermath. The main tone that pervades the book is mocking contempt for both the Questionnaire and the Americans, the Allies with whom he had the most contact (he had none, fortunately for him, with the Russians). Apparently this tone was habitual to him; he even quotes his brother, when talking about their family background, as saying "Please spare me your cheap sarcasm for once!"

When released from prison, von Salomon reconnected with his old *Freikorps* and right-wing, nationalist, comrades, notably Hermann Ehrhardt but also many less-famous men, and traveled in the same circles as Ernst Jünger (who appears a lot in these pages, but never as a main protagonist, just popping in and out), at the intersection of letters and politics. He draws an incisive picture of hard and determined men unsure which way to turn, making plans, dropping plans, wondering what to do, at loose ends about how to spend their talents and achieve their desires in the new Germany. In von Salomon's telling, which fits with his actions, he and his crowd had little truck with the National Socialists, whom they regarded as gutter upstarts, excessively focused on

the Jews and too desirous of popular consent. Of the National Socialists, he quotes one of his closest friends in this period, Hartmut Plaas (shot in 1944 in Ravensbrück for involvement in a plot against Hitler), “A man who breaks windows and sets fire to churches and insults whole groups of human beings gets a taste for that sort of thing and keeps on doing it.” Today’s Right should take note, and realize the Left, already doing all of those things and ever more addicted to them, can only be stopped in the same way as were the National Socialists.

The Reichstag Fire, or rather the way the National Socialists took advantage of it (not dissimilar to the way our own Regime has tried to take advantage of the Electoral Justice Protest, though vastly less competently and with much less success), followed by the Röhm Purge and Kristallnacht, mostly put an end to all this intellectual ferment. Like Jünger, von Salomon, despite his connections with those disliked by the regime, managed to never receive its full ire—as with Jünger, his fame as a right-wing figure gave him some cover. 1930s and 1940s Germany was not totalitarian in the sense of the Soviet Union, with complete control over all of life combined with random terror, but anyone with political leanings not in tune with the regime was eventually in danger if he did not keep his opinions to himself. This caused even von Salomon to focus on work, rather than politics. He worked for a year in Vienna for Othmar Spann, whom he uses as an example of one of very many smart men who could not see that National Socialism was going to triumph, and soon. “‘No, no,’ cried Spann. ‘They could never govern a country. What’s their policy, their scientific doctrine? What is it? It just doesn’t exist. The stuff [Alfred] Rosenberg writes, it’s . . . it’s rubbish!’ I said that what Rosenberg wrote was undoubtedly rubbish, but I added that would affect the National Socialists as little as their lack of scientific doctrine.”

This attitude, that the National Socialists could never win power, was very common on the German Right; Ehrhardt had similar opinions. But they were all proved wrong, and von Salomon was proved correct. Noting that the “nationalist right,” meaning those not National Socialist but rather traditionalist, was both indecisive and failed to understand both economics and culture, “money and mind,” he concludes: “Problems of this sort certainly never bothered Hitler. He did not fear money or mind; he simply despised them. This undoubtedly

gave him a great advantage over the national movement. Nor was he the sort of man who went fishing in the Rubicon." Instead, as everybody knows, using democratic/totalitarian methods, rather than the hierarchical/authoritarian methods von Salomon saw as the right path, Hitler swept to power.

As the National Socialists rose and then the war began, von Salomon was always facing potential complications and unpleasantness resulting from his Jewish connections. These did not include being killed; it was only very late in the war that German Jews, as Jews, were shipped to death camps. It was more the possibility of ever-escalating humiliations to person and property. (All this is very well covered, in much more detail, in Victor Klemperer's famous diaries.) Von Salomon was not Jewish, and had no Jewish ancestors, but his name sounded very Jewish to the average German. However, he was famous enough that everyone knew him, or realized who he was when he pointed it out, so that was more of an inconvenience than anything. His girlfriend Ille, however, faced more problems; avoiding being identified as a Jew became more and more important as the war ground on. Perhaps her association with von Salomon insulated her, but he never says, exactly. Mostly, her problems appear through her reporting back to von Salomon how she sees other Jews abused by official functionaries of various types.

He wasn't rich, nor was he good at getting rich. So he made ends meet by publishing several books (including *The Outlaws*). He wriggled out of attempts to get him to join the NSDAP. He involved himself in (and wrote a book about) the Peasant's Movement in Schleswig-Holstein, a movement not dissimilar to the recent populist protests such as the Freedom Convoy in Canada or the Yellow Vests in France (though with more bombs). He then took up screenwriting, which he perceived as largely neutral territory, not totally politically controlled, and populated by those not eager to toady to the National Socialists. In his spare time, with a group of friends, he collected vast reams of data about the post-war right wing, until one day he was directly threatened that he had to turn over the data to National Socialist control (the implication being that the National Socialists found this information likely to tarnish their self-curated origin story), and immediately did so, then went to live in the Bavarian countryside, where he was during much of the war and at the war's end.

From all these fractal recollections, eventually, the reader gets a flavor of what life was like for von Salomon, and by extension for German men of his class and politics, from 1930 on. The creeping power of the National Socialists was annoying to von Salomon, not only for personal but also for professional reasons. As to the professional controls, on writing (and, later, screenwriting), "It all seemed quite harmless to begin with. The first measures they took were so stupid and so naïve, that it was child's play to get around them. But day by day they tightened the net." The same was true across all aspects of society, and the reader's mind again immediately sees the parallels to today's Left—witness, for example, the British state's recent arrest of a woman silently praying on the street in Birmingham, something inconceivable, even in totalitarian Britain, only a few years ago.

But von Salomon's biggest objection to the National Socialists was philosophical, not practical or even personal. In his mind the state was everything, preceding the people, and the National Socialists regarded themselves as superior to the state. "From the very beginning I had always regarded the sole object of the great nationalist movement that grew out of the collapse of 1918 as being the renewal of the concept of the state, a rebirth that had to be revolutionary in its methods but conservative in its nature. So logically—and even before the turning point marked by the emergence of Adolf Hitler within the nationalist movement—I was bound to regard any attempt to switch the nationalist accent from the state to the people, from authoritarianism to totalitarianism, as a disgraceful and absurd betrayal of our true aims." Von Salomon rejected National Socialism because "[Hitler] let himself be summoned by the people . . . he proclaimed the popular ideal by means of which he would create the reality of the state. Instead of vice versa." Hitler's obsession with race was part and parcel of this exaltation of popular will over the will of the state, which is mostly why von Salomon thought little of it.

At no point, however, was he interested in sacrificing himself to undermine the National Socialist government. In von Salomon's telling, those with whom he associated, and an ever-increasing number of Germans, viewed the only possibility as winning the war and then "getting rid of" the National Socialists. This is interesting because today, nobody ever mentions this possibility. We are told the postwar future,

had Germany won, would have been the world of *The Man in the High Castle*—a globe-spanning totalitarian empire embodying the worst aspects of National Socialism, forever. Maybe. But it's also, if you try and squint a little, easy to imagine National Socialism ending, or mutating, into some kind of merely authoritarian and hierarchical system, along the lines of von Salomon's desires, and as a result today's Europe, and today's West, being a vastly better place than it is today, a culture and civilization with a future, rather than one hurtling into a brick wall.

The latter half of the book is concerned with 1944 through 1946—the waning days of the war, the coming of the Allies, and von Salomon's being thrown, like a great many other Germans, into a concentration camp by the Americans, along with Ille. In 1945, von Salomon was living on a farm near the Bavarian village of Siegsdorf; the Americans pushed through and defeated the Germans. He offers fascinating detail about the lives of ordinary Germans in these times; the chaos and unclear lines of authority alternating with German efficiency; the die-hards among the military (primarily the SS) contrasted with most others, who by this time just wanted to get by and get it over with. The Americans bombed, relatively indiscriminately, even random isolated farms; and executed SS men whom they captured. None of this is startling or not known (rather it is not discussed), but it is interesting to read these events from a German perspective.

It's never exactly clear what von Salomon thought about Germany losing the war. He didn't want to lose it, but seems to feel, and claims that the vast majority thought, that by 1945 it was "senseless" and just needed to end. He has contempt for the Americans—their manners, their politics, their hypocrisy, their stealing of watches from Germans on the street—but some of this seems like mere sour grapes. I suppose I'd be mad too if I lost an existential war, all my political visions turned to dust, and I and my wife and children were physically abused.

After establishing control, the Americans imprisoned many thousands of Germans without any process, much less trial, for, more or less, "security reasons," but not being German, were extremely haphazard and careless about it. They also, to von Salomon's great anger, maltreated the prisoners, including with beatings. On the other hand, they didn't kill anyone, deliberately at least (although several of von Salomon's interlocutors in the camps were later executed, either by the Allies for

“war crimes” or by Communist successor states as revenge), and this was the era when the Americans discovered what the Germans had done in their own concentration camps, vastly worse than the treatment in the camps in which von Salomon found himself. Unsurprisingly, this made the Americans (especially the Jewish ones) extremely angry and unsympathetic, and von Salomon acknowledges the legitimacy of the anger, but it does not seem to have quenched his ire at being imprisoned for a year. And there he ends his book, with his (and Ille’s) release from prison, never being charged or even accused of anything, just one day shown the door.

It’s all interesting—but what does this have to do with today? Quite a bit. As I detail often, there is no decent, much less aspirational, future for mankind until the Left, with its destructive ideology birthed in the Enlightenment, is permanently defeated and becomes something of mere historical interest—just as National Socialism is today. This can only be accomplished by a societal upheaval and realignment; we have to go backwards to go forwards, whether we like it or not. That moving backwards will, I believe, by itself largely discredit the Left, although it is an open question whether it will be enough to permanently remove the allure of the seductive lies of the Left, which appeal to core defects in human nature. But we must not let worry about that larger goal tangle us up; that is mostly a problem for the generations to come. Our part is taking practical steps to extirpate their evil when the Left is totally defeated politically (which probably also means militarily, but the details do not matter for our purposes today).

What are those practical steps? Denazification is an example of what might be called administrative steps to uproot a defeated ideology, which is our focus today (I’m here ignoring other possible steps toward the Left permanently evanescing, such as religious awakening and education). As a historical matter, though, denazification is mostly regarded as a failure. “Failure” here doesn’t mean that National Socialism did not become entirely discredited as a political movement. Obviously it did (although, like “white supremacy,” its ghost is often used today as a boogeyman to frighten the ignorant and, more importantly, to throw off chaff that prevents collective recognition of the creation and feeding of violent anti-white hatred, which is one of the central policies, and rapidly becoming the central policy, of our Regime). “Failure” means that the

actual mechanisms used by the Allies, such as the Questionnaire, had little to do with that discrediting. It also means, for some, that too few Germans were punished—when, in 1946, the Allies passed the “Law for Liberation from National Socialism and Militarism,” in effect turning over denazification to the Germans, a range of harsh punishments were prescribed for nearly anyone involved with National Socialism, but the system quickly became unmanageable due to massive caseload and obvious injustices, which together with the advent of the Cold War resulted in its rapid erosion.

Thus, it is an open question whether the Fragebogen approach, forcing self-identification by individuals of their participation in a defeated political system’s activities, actually results in discrediting that political system. It hasn’t been tried again (unfortunately, no attempt at all was made after 1989 to hunt down and punish Eastern European Communists; rather, as Ryszard Legutko has ably discussed, they merged to their profit with their ideological cousins, the “liberal democrats”). Moreover, the ultimate success of denazification was much easier because a competing ideology, more destructive but cloaked under the name of liberal democracy, was on the ascendant and its defects and horrors had not become apparent. The Allies, and the Germans they picked to rule the defeated German nation, offered the venom of the Left hidden under the promise of unlimited freedom and unbounded wealth, in exchange for dropping an ideology nearly everyone had tired of anyway. I’d pick that over Hitler’s smoking corpse, too, if I was a German in 1947, regardless of what my answers to the Questionnaire were.

We, however, aren’t going to have the luxury of offering something that is all benefits and no costs as an alternative to the discredited Left. Any reality-based program, such as Foundationalism, doesn’t offer candy and fun; it offers hard work and limitations in exchange for a strong society and civilizational glory. I don’t think identifying those who contributed to Left hegemony by itself discredits the Left, any more than the Questionnaire, of itself, discredited National Socialism. But we still have to make sure the Left does not poison the future as it has poisoned our present. A chief goal must be identifying who held the defeated ideology, who propagated it, at what level, and what crimes they committed during the ascendancy of that ideology. To that end

alone, we will need to combine something like the Questionnaire with follow-up action, not primarily to discredit the Left but rather to mete out justice and purge the seeds of Left venom from our society.

I'd guess that only five or ten percent of those on the Left, the adherents of which ideology are perhaps thirty percent of the country, will refuse to adopt the new modes and orders. My thesis is that when the Left is defeated, most of its adherents, high and low, will simply adopt the principles of the new society. This has always been the case, from Napoleon to the National Socialists, especially among the young, and those not materially wedded to the Left should be allowed to, and encouraged to, simply change their views. But that five or ten percent could be identified by forced self-revealing along the lines of the Questionnaire, combined with reviewing social media, email, and to whom and how much they donated money and time. That would unveil all information the Questionnaire asked about, and more, without only relying on self-reporting, as the Allies had to do when technology did not allow the same centralized collection of information.

For the five or ten percent of incorrigible Left malefactors, once identified, my remedies are simple—confiscation of wealth, lustration with respect to any political power, and permanent rustication or exile (aside from the worst offenders, naturally, who will be subject to public trial and more exemplary punishment, just as they were in Germany). Organized confiscation of the wealth of political opponents has been an intermittent tool since Sulla, although the Allies did not confiscate the wealth of individual Germans, for the most part, because there was little wealth left to confiscate. That's the opposite of our problem now, when most of the wealth of the nation has been concentrated in the hands of the Left, which means there is a real opportunity to put the new, post-Left society on a sound financial footing (even though much or most of our economy is fake, there are still a great number of assets with actual value in America, and far too many of them in Left hands being used for destructive purposes). The Allies did lustrate and rusticate—Carl Schmitt, for example, refused to participate in the denazification program, and was therefore denied the right to teach. But, as with the entire denazification program, lustration and rustication were largely stillborn. We shouldn't make that mistake.

Thus, what we can learn from Questionnaire is not so much administrative tips, but the knowledge that determination and follow-through will be necessary to permanently silence the Left. Theory is useless without power, it is true, but we should at least give some thought to these matters as we approach the acquisition of that power.