Siegfried Lentz died at 88; sought lessons in Germany's past

BY WILLIAM TAYLOR

German writer ac-

claimed for novels and stories that examine the country's role in the rise of Nazism, died on Sept. 7 in Berlin. He was 88.

His death was announced by his long-

time publisher, Hoffman & Campe.

Along with Günter Grass, Heinrich Böll and other German writers who rose to prominence after World War II, Lentz was a member of Group 47, a literary circle that encour-

aged openness and frankness in the aftermath of Nazi Germany's defeat. Born in 1927 in the town of Tangermünde near Brunswick, Lentz grew up in a family of middle-class German army officers. He joined the army after Germany's defeat and was stationed in France for three months after the war, but returned to his home in his native Saxony. He was influenced by many of his most important works, the war—The German Labyrinth. Published in 1981, it tells the story of Siggi Jansen, a young man who questions the rightness of his father's military service, which he feels is a betrayal of his country. The novel, which is set in the early 1940s, was banned by the Nazi regime and was not published until after the war. Lentz's other major works include the novel "Band of Brothers," which was made into a television series in 1984, and "The German Labyrinth," which was adapted into a film in 1989. He was awarded the Goethe Prize in 1984 and the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1998.

Lentz's death was mourned by friends and colleagues, who praised his work for its courage and its attempt to confront the past. "He was a great writer," said former West German chancellor Helmut Kohl. "He wrote about the past, but he did not deny it."

Lentz died on Dec. 19, 2011, in Berlin. He is survived by his wife, Annemarie, and their daughter, Christiane.

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In the context of broader German identity.

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