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Die Ruhrfrage 1945/46 und die Entstehung des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen: Britische, Französische und Amerikanische Akten by Rolf Steininger

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In many ways the most unsatisfactory aspect of the whole process, and one which again is treated too briefly by the author, was the investigation instituted into the responsibility of the politicians in power for the German occupation itself and into their culpability with regard to the policy they pursued toward the occupying forces up to the end of August 1943. That this was placed in the hands of a series of commissions set up by parliament and consisting exclusively of politicians, and that a final decision on the matter was not taken until ten years after the end of the war, when other aspects of the settlement could no longer be influenced by it, does seem to fall short of the highest standards of impartial justice, even if the recommendation that no action be taken against any individual might well have been made by a more balanced tribunal at an earlier stage. Tamm also discusses the trial of seventy-seven German war criminals (none of whom suffered the death penalty) and the postwar debate about the "liquidation" of suspected informers by the Resistance while the war raged.

As has been suggested, while the author's treatment of his subject is cool and scholarly, he is highly critical of a number of the leading personalities, especially among the politicians, and of various aspects of the judicial process, in particular of the way in which the policy of the government during the first three years of the Occupation was so inadequately debated during the period of the trials. The material on which his study is based is almost exclusively legal, much of it was previously unavailable. And the cases analyzed in detail are generally those that were appealed, which perhaps gives a certain slant to the interpretation of the procedure through the courts. Tamm is a student of law rather than a historian. Aspects of the subject like public attitudes toward the question of collaboration and its punishment are alluded to only briefly and still await searching investigation.

Tamm's painstaking survey does nevertheless throw much light on the experiences of many ordinary Danes during the Second World War and, in particular, on the difficulties created for anyone in a position of authority by government policy for much of that time—a situation very different from the more clear cut choice facing a Dutchman or a Norwegian in the same period. It is a pity that the English summary provided is not more detailed and that it leaves out much of the author's argumentation (although a fuller account in German can be found in *Zeitschrift für neuere Rechtsgeschichte* ["Kollaboration und ihre strafrechtliche Ahndung in Danemark nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg," 5. Jahrgang (1983), pp. 44–73]). The value of the work is also reduced by a brief index limited to personal names.

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**Die Ruhrfrage 1945/46 und die Entstehung des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen:**

**Britische, Französische und Amerikanische Akten.** Edited by *Rolf Steininger*

Quellen zur Geschichte des Parlamentarismus und der Politischen Parteien, Series

4. Germany since 1945, volume 4

Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1988. Pp. 1036. DM 220.

No issue stirred the debates on Germany after 1945 more profoundly than the future of the Ruhr Valley. The heartland of industrial Europe, it had armed the vast Nazi armies. Security from future German aggression demanded the destruction of the same Ruhr industry desperately needed for European reconstruction. The story of the Ruhr Valley

in the critical year and a half after the war thus reflects all the essential developments from the transformation of Allied policy toward Germany to the origins of the Cold War

With the opening of the British and, to a lesser extent, French archives in the last decade, a major reevaluation of these core issues of postwar Europe has begun. Most striking has been the discovery that it was the British, not the Americans, who drove the process of transforming German policy and anticipated the Cold War confrontation in Europe. The critical documents for this vital reevaluation are now available to scholars in this beautifully edited, printed, and bound volume, together with a splendid two-hundred-page survey by the editor—a major contribution in and of itself.

Steininger presents a persuasively sympathetic view of the British. Less traumatized by conquering German armies than the French, yet more closely threatened by renewed aggression in Europe than the Americans, the British were the first to shift their attention from fear of Germany to fear of Soviet expansion. Despite considerable early British sympathies for French efforts to split parts or all of the Rhine and Ruhr regions from the future Germany and create a separate state of "Rhenania," fears of Soviet expansion and the prospect of a Communist East German state or even Soviet control over a future German government in Berlin moved London to resist splitting off any sections of Western Germany. In fact, the British even came to oppose placing the Ruhr Valley or its industries under international control until the distribution of power in the future Germany had been fully settled. Interestingly, Soviet pressures on parts of the British Empire seemed to play at least as important a role in this policy shift as Soviet machinations in East Germany and Berlin. Only in the spring of 1946 did the United States gradually adopt this position, which then resulted in close Anglo-American collaboration, the creation of the Bizone, and the establishment of the West German state. Only then were the delineations of the Cold War, which the British had anticipated by the late summer of 1945, set. Since the fear of a powerful Germany diminished only with new concerns about Soviet expansion, one might well argue that only the East-West split prevented a far more fateful creation of a separate Rhine-Ruhr state in the west.

Steininger's findings confirm that it was American pressures that ultimately foiled the Labour government's plans to transform and control Ruhr mining and iron and steel industries through some form of socialization. Still, even the first tentative steps toward socialization caused such international (France, Benelux) and German furor that the project might well have run into difficulties without American opposition.

The actual borders of the new state of Northrhine-Westphalia were drawn by the conservative officers of the British military government in Germany, who were as concerned to keep Social Democrats from taking power as they were to create an economically viable entity. Ultimately, three major factors seem to have led to the creation of this economically powerful, heavily populated (12 million people), and cohesive state which was to play such a key role in the reconstruction of West Germany and Western Europe: (1) British (and later American) realization of the importance of this industrial heartland for European reconstruction, which stopped its destruction à la Morgenthau, (2) the fear of Soviet expansion, which worked against internationalization of the Ruhr or splitting of West Germany, and (3) the influence of the conservative officers of the British Military Government, who favored a state which would be dominated by Catholic, moderate conservative political forces, rather than a smaller Ruhr state run by Social Democrats and Communists.

The overwhelming majority of the 244 documents, twelve maps, and four facsimile illustrations are British records from the Foreign Office (FO 371), Cabinet, and Prime

Minister's papers, while the records of the Military Government, which became available in 1985, have yielded nothing like the full documentation of the American OMGUS papers. In addition, there are about a dozen documents from the French Foreign Office, a few key statements by the U S Department of State, which have not been printed in FRUS (*Foreign Relations of the United States*, published by the U S Department of State), a handful of German records specifically relevant to the British Military Government's planning for the state and government of Northrhine-Westphalia, and a few interviews to fill gaps in the documents. All texts are reprinted in the original languages, that is, mostly in English, a few in French and German. Documents available in other printed collections such as FRUS were not reprinted. The documents, which form a close, often day-to-day chronological survey, are very well annotated, cross-referenced, and indexed. Only four particularly lengthy documents were abridged. Anyone working in this period of German, British, French, and even American history will enthusiastically welcome this beautifully edited collection as an invaluable tool for all future research. Those documents which could not be included are available to scholars at the main Northrhine-Westphalian state archive (Hauptstaatsarchiv Dusseldorf). The parallel German records pertaining to the establishment of Northrhine-Westphalia are reprinted in volume 5 of the same series. Wolfgang Holscher, ed., *Nordrhein-Westfalen Deutsche Quellen zur Entstehung des Landes 1945/46* (Dusseldorf, 1988).

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**The Economic History of Eastern Europe, 1919–1975. Volume 2 Interwar Policy, the War and Reconstruction.** Edited by *M C Kaser* and *E A Radice*. Volume 3 **Institutional Change within a Planned Economy.** Edited by *M C Kaser*

Oxford: Oxford University Press, Clarendon Press, 1987. Pp. xi+666, xi+301. \$88.00, \$64.00

Eastern Europe, that amorphous, undefinable part of the European subcontinent known for the political rivalries among its numerous nationalities and ethnic fragments, also has an economic history quite worthy of our attention. It is notable not only for its own sake but also because the similarities and contrasts with Western European patterns can help us understand the basic processes of European economic development. The volumes under review, part of a projected five-volume series, contribute to this effort by exploring economic change and continuity in the twentieth century.

By the time of the outbreak of World War I, the growth impulses emanating from the West coupled with autonomous forces of change had imparted a modernizing tendency to the economies of some areas of Eastern Europe. Bohemia, Moravia, Austria, and Silesia, for instance, had already acquired a distinctly modern industrial base by contemporary standards. To be sure, the region was still overwhelmingly agricultural and even backward, but some sectors were making real progress and had even penetrated western markets. Thus, extrapolating from the developments of the prior half century, one would have had reason to be optimistic, and in the summer of 1914 most observers probably would have predicted that the gap with Western Europe would continue to narrow. Then the realities of the twentieth century began to unfold. Indeed, few other regions of the world have as much reason to be disappointed with their recent history.