

all its guises) to be integrated fully into our understanding of the relationship between the Third Reich and war.

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*The German Occupation of Belgium 1940–1944.* By Werner Warmbrunn. 'American University Studies', Series IX, History, vol. 122. New York, Berlin, Berne Frankfurt/Main, Paris, Vienna: Peter Lang. 1993. xv + 365 pp. £37.00.

Even on subjects as closely studied as the Second World War, there is a tendency for some scholarly works to escape the attention they deserve. This seems to have been the case with this book, perhaps because it relates to a country, and to a field of German occupation policy which are perceived as unfashionable in an academic climate increasingly centred on events in eastern Europe. More than 30 years ago, Professor Warmbrunn published *The Dutch under German Occupation 1940–1945*, a book which has stood the test of time and has remained a standard work on the subject in English. To some extent, this latest work could be regarded as a companion volume, though the focus here is on the nature of the German governance of Belgium, rather than on the reaction of the people to occupation which was the central theme in the text on the Netherlands.

Given the limited knowledge of most readers on the political, economic and social structures of Belgium in the pre-war era, there are welcome introductory chapters which survey the main aspects of the people, institutions and politics of Belgium before delving into the linguistic division which is central to an understanding of Belgian history. All authors on the Low Countries have this problem of putting their study into context, and Professor Warmbrunn has managed this admirably, covering all the essential elements with a laudable brevity. He then deals with the occupying administration, its various offices and functions, and its development over time. In this respect, the book enables a useful comparison to be made with structures in the Netherlands, as outlined in Gerhard Hirschfeld's *Nazi Rule and Dutch Collaboration* (1988). The essential difference between the occupation regimes was, of course, that while the Dutch were handed over to a German civilian administration led by *Reichskommissar* Arthur Seyss-Inquart, the Belgians remained under the military government of General Alexander von Falkenhausen. This difference is often used to explain contrasts between the two countries without providing details of precisely *how* this came about. Warmbrunn shows how the German administration in Belgium worked and how it dealt with internal institutional conflicts (primarily between the military, NSDAP and SS), and examines its relationships with the Belgian authorities. This latter element is of particular interest as Warmbrunn highlights the fact that German policy and Belgian responses were to some extent conditioned by the experiences of 1914–18. Those involved in 1940 were old enough to remember the previous occupation and both sides were prepared to learn from that experience. This undoubtedly helps to explain the level of co-operation between the Belgian administration and the Germans, with the latter unwilling to make excessive demands lest the civil servants ceased to work normally. One good example of the way this stand-off worked in practice was in relation to policies against the Jews, where von Falkenhausen tried to minimize the powers of the SS, and refused to sanction the use of Belgian police in tracking down the Nazis' quarry.

The Belgian case seems to provide the classic example of an occupation regime which operated relatively successfully until the economic and ideological demands emanating from Berlin served to upset the balance which von Falkenhausen and his deputy, Eggert Reeder, had worked so hard to foster. Warmbrunn surveys the General's cautious approach to relationships with the Belgian monarch, élite, administration and Catholic church, noting that they shared many values: a desire for law and order, the retention of established order and structures, and a fear of communism. He portrays von Falkenhausen and Reeder as men seeking to maintain their standards and ethical code against an encroaching SS and increasing pressures from the centre. By remaining in post and holding the military administration together until the last weeks of the occupation, they may have saved the Belgians from a much less sympathetic regime. In so doing, however, they also made themselves accomplices in the war crimes they were unable or unwilling to prevent, including the deportation of around 40 per cent of the Jewish population. The analysis is an even-handed one, and based on extensive use of primary material together with a wide range of French and Flemish sources. While extremely informative in its own right, the book also provides a basis for further comparative research on German rule throughout occupied western Europe.

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*Lower Silesia from Nazi Germany to Communist Poland, 1942–49.* By Sebastian Siebel-Achenbach. Houndmills and London: Macmillan. 1994. xx + 381 pp. £47.50.

This monograph study of Lower Silesia is a pioneering study of a region largely ignored by Western scholarship. It has three particular merits. First, it places the local history of a key region in a context of international history and explores the interrelationship of developments at the two levels. This is an ambitious task but essential to an explanation of the fate of Lower Silesia, for, as the writer shows, the region was at the centre of the 'which Neisse?' wrangle which much exercised the victor powers at the close of the Second World War. Although there is inevitably some unevenness, the blend of international and regional history for the most part works well. The second striking merit of this book is its well-chosen time-span, ignoring the obvious boundary of 1945 to adopt instead a chronological framework much better suited to this topic. Third, the author's energy and conscientiousness in locating source material in Western countries and Poland is commendable.

Some of Siebel-Achenbach's evidence and interpretation require comment. He tells us that 'almost 4000 ethnic Germans were massacred by retreating Polish army units' in the 'atrocities at Bydgoszcz on 3-4 September 1939, known as "Bloody Sunday in Bromberg"' (p. 22). This is nearly a forty-fold inflation. According to a recent monograph, a minimum of 100 ethnic Germans were killed on this occasion: Christian Jansen and Arno Weckbecker, *Der 'Volksdeutsche Selbstschutz' in Polen 1939/40* (Munich, 1992, p. 27). More a matter of interpretation is Siebel-Achenbach's overestimation of Cardinal Bertram, Archbishop of Breslau and head of the Fulda Bishops' Conference. Siebel-Achenbach believes that Bertram's death in 1945 'could not have come at a more inopportune moment for the German Church. It robbed the Germans of a man whose stature and influence gathered over the decades might have been useful as a bulwark