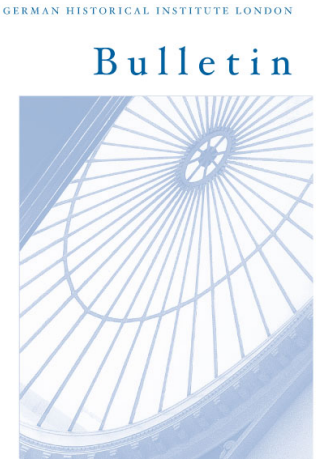

PETER E. FÄSSLER, ANDREAS NEUWÖHNER, and FLORIAN STAFFEL (eds.), *Briten in Westfalen 1945–2017: Besatzer, Verbündete, Freunde?* Studien und Quellen zur Westfälischen Geschichte, 86 (Paderborn: Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh, 2019), x + 388 pp. ISBN 978 3 506 79250 1. €49.90

In the last few years, numerous books, edited collections, and articles have appeared considering, in some form or another, the history of the Allied occupation of Germany and its aftermath. This is a welcome change for a field that has remained on the fringes of mainstream debate for too long. Finally, it seems, scholars are reckoning with the long-term impact of the immediate post-war period on the history of modern Europe. Yet significant gaps in our knowledge remain, particularly with regard to the British Army's continuous presence in Germany since the end of the Second World War. Peter E. Fäßler, Andreas Neuwöhner, and Florian Staffel's edited collection on the historical significance of the British in Westphalia since 1945 makes significant strides in this direction.

This set of essays originates from a conference held at the University of Paderborn in March 2017. The conference was part of a larger research and exhibition project initiated by the city of Paderborn and intended to recognize a momentous juncture in the history of Anglo-German relations, namely, the withdrawal of British forces from their bases in north-west Germany after more than seventy years. As noted in this volume's introduction, it is a story often told as if written by a Hollywood screenwriter: two bitter enemies forced together become allies and even friends. This impressive collection of sixteen essays by scholars from Britain and Germany uncovers the hidden complexity underlying the history of Anglo-German rapprochement.

The book's first section, on British policy in Westphalia during the years of military occupation, explores the formulation and implementation of policies such as re-education, denazification, and dismantling. Benedikt Neuwöhner's chapter considers how British experiences in Germany in the aftermath of the First World War shaped the post-1945 occupation. The early 1940s, we learn, saw a series of publications by veterans and experts outlining Britain's supposed mistakes during the occupation of the Rhineland from 1918 to 1930. These ideas were certainly influential in Britain, where the lega-

cy of the Rhineland occupation resonated with a war-weary public. But as Neuwöhner shows, they also informed official preparation for the occupation and instilled a 'hard peace' ethos in the rules and regulations of occupation life. J. H. Morgan's *Assize of Arms* is shown to have been particularly influential amongst the British military and civil administration, helping to establish concerns that the Germans would once again seek to organize sympathy.[1]

Kerstin Schulte and Jens Westemeier both consider British implementation of denazification and re-education. Schulte's detailed study of Westphalian internment camps is an important addition to existing work on internment in the Soviet Zone. She convincingly argues that these camps were a vital component of Allied policy, intended to help minimize security risks to British troops and to expunge Nazism from German society. But she also shows their long-term impact to be quite different: internees came to see themselves as victims, while scandals such as Bad Nenndorf dogged Anglo-German rapprochement. Westemeier's study of Werl prison draws similar conclusions, illustrating how this institution, which housed convicted Nazis, including *Wehrmacht* and SS Generals, became an irritant in the Anglo-German relationship and a key part of Adenauer's early *Vergangenheitspolitik*. The chapter would have benefited from further probing into the decidedly dubious procedures used to justify releases on medical grounds in the 1950s, a political compromise that avoided controversial amnesties or pardons. But both of these essays fruitfully illuminate the multifaceted influence of the Cold War upon Anglo-German relations in the immediate post-war period. While political leaders could alter their rhetoric in line with new political priorities, the practical reality of dealing with internment camps or convicted prisoners was much more troublesome.

Next, Philipp Erdmann takes a different approach to the impact of British occupation policy on Westphalia by considering the democratization of local politics in Münster. He argues that the British successfully constructed an institutional framework prioritizing the local level as a 'school of democracy', with a legacy still visible to this

[1] See J. H. Morgan, *Assize of Arms: The Disarmament of Germany and Her Rearmament (1919–1939)*, with a Preface by Lieut.-General Sir G. M. W. Macdonogh (New York, 1946).

day. An interesting follow-up may be a more direct comparison of democratizing programmes across the various zones of occupation. The final essay in this section, Maria Perrefort's study of dismantling in Hamm, is a useful case study of an underexamined aspect of the Allied occupation. This chapter illustrates how the inconsistent character of British occupation policy could be a major strain on relations with the German populace. Yet there remains much to be said about the actual economic impact of dismantling and its role in facilitating political consciousness in north-western Germany and in Cold War realpolitik.

The second set of essays considers a fundamental part of British occupation policy: youth work. Marcus Köster uncovers the missionary zeal with which British youth officers went about their work, as they attempted to instil tolerance and democratic awareness in young Germans. Köster manages to underline the way in which British expectations of Germany were skewed by years of mutual antagonism, with youth officers often uncritically accepting Nazi propaganda about the supposed ideological discipline of German teenagers. But the chapter could have explored how the youth work programme was also a key facet of British post-war propaganda. It was commonly touted as the archetypical long-term project in occupied Germany, without easy solutions but nevertheless integral to Britain 'winning the peace'. The essay by Barbara Stambolis thoughtfully considers encounters between British and German children on youth exchange programmes, making the multifaceted and intergenerational nature of 'coming to terms with the past' abundantly clear.

Sarah Paterson's chapter on children's experiences of Operation Union, the relocation of British families to post-war Germany in the late 1940s, is a vital contribution to existing scholarship on the social history of the occupation. Paterson's detailed research ranges from stationery allocations to school meals. But perhaps her most significant contribution is in the conclusion that British preparations for schools in the zone of occupation were somewhat hamstrung by the lack of clarity on how long British soldiers would be stationed in Germany. It is certainly true that at the end of the war, estimates amongst commentators, administrators, and politicians ranged from six months to fifty years. The unexpected longevity of the British presence in Germany is perhaps a useful context for all of the essays in this volume.

The next section concentrates firmly on British–German rapprochement and begins with Christopher Knowles's informative study on the history of marriages between British personnel and German women. The detailed research into this intriguing facet of the occupation is valuable, not least for adjusting our existing estimate of marriages between 1947 and 1951 from 10,000 to around 15,000. This is an important and often overlooked facet of the Anglo-German relationship since the Second World War, yet Knowles's historiographical summary lacks some subtlety: the notion (p. 224) that feminist historians have interpreted 'all women in an occupied country' as 'suffering victims' is perhaps an unfair characterization. Likewise, Knowles's phrasing regarding the evidence of rapes perpetrated by Allied troops is unhelpful: the suggestion (p. 224) that sexual assaults were committed 'even, it has to be said, by some British soldiers' belies a sense of unwarranted British exceptionalism. It obscures the author's crucial point, namely, that while much attention has, rightfully, been given to the heinous acts perpetrated by Soviet forces, there are also countless examples of British, American, and French personnel responsible for acts of sexual violence in this period.

Peter Speiser and Thomas Küster's essays both focus on the place of the British Army of the Rhine (BAOR) in Westphalian society and within the broader history of Anglo-German relations. In three case studies, Speiser shows how requisitioning, ineffective communication, and hostile incidents served to undermine rapprochement throughout the 1950s. In a particularly entertaining episode, we learn how national reporting of a comical bar fight in Hameln served to inflame local tensions. Küster's chapter presents a broader sweep of the BAOR's history in Westphalia from the 1960s to the present day. This study demonstrates an impressive amount of research into various phases of deployment and the changing role of the British Army in Westphalia. Yet Küster warns us not to overstate cultural contact and rapprochement 'on the ground', but rather emphasizes that the British in Westphalia lived in a parallel society to that of their German neighbours. This relationship, he continues, depended on mutual goodwill to see through moments of conflict.

Oliver Zöllner's study of British Forces radio offers an original take on German relations with the occupying powers that looks beyond primary arenas of interaction. Zöllner argues that British Forces radio, by inadvertently gaining a widespread listenership

amongst the local population, became a facet of public diplomacy. It was, he suggests, a means of 'relationship building' through the introduction of a 'friend from abroad' to German listeners. This essay demonstrates the importance of further research into the British influence upon post-war German society, given the overstated focus on 'Americanization' rather than a broader process of 'Westernization'.

The final set of essays offers a more experimental, interdisciplinary assessment of Anglo-German relations in Westphalia. Michael Girke's essay on Stephen Spender's 1946 travel book, *European Witness*, is a testament to the value of literary writing in historical inquiry.[2] Indeed, Spender's book was one of several published in this period that presented British readers with an image of post-war Germany and now stand as vital sources for historians. These travelogues are some of the most detailed explorations of life at a time of great upheaval. Also taking a touristic theme, Fred Kaspar's essay on the British confiscation of Westphalian spa buildings between 1945 and 1955 illustrates the breadth of influence that the early years of the occupation had upon German society. The short and long-term impact of this history is a fascinating case study for the reconstruction of Westphalia's social and physical environment in the aftermath of war.

Jana Flieshart's sociological and almost psychogeographical study of the German civilian workers in the British Army's Dortmund garrison demonstrates how historical changes at a macro level can have significant personal, psychological, and emotional ramifications. And last, but certainly not least, Ulrich Harteisen's chapter offers an enchanting history of the moorlands and sand dunes which make up the Senne. We learn how British Army manoeuvres on the Sennelager Training Area have served to craft a unique natural habitat, preserving biodiversity amid piles of spent tank shells. Harteisen's concluding remarks on the uncertainties and opportunities for the future of the habitat as the British military leaves Westphalia is an apt endpoint for a thoughtful collection of essays.

What is perhaps most striking about Fäßler, Neuwöhner, and Staffel's book is the interrelatedness of its constituent essays. Evidently, no policy stood alone in the British scheme of military occu-

[2] Stephen Spender, *European Witness* (London, 1946).

pation and the subsequent period of Anglo-German cohabitation. Even more significantly, this collection of essays ably shows how Britain's presence in Westphalia since 1945 has been a multifaceted story defined by success *and* failure, hope *and* fear, optimism *and* pessimism, antagonism *and* friendship. While this story ultimately became one of rapprochement and growing affinity, it certainly did not follow the linear development of a classic Hollywood film. Rather, the history of interactions and relations in Westphalia serves to complicate such a simplistic narrative, originally constructed as part of Cold War *Vergangenheitspolitik*.

At the same time, this work does suffer somewhat from an overriding focus on the immediate post-war period. Less than half of the essays directly engage with the social, political, economic, and military interactions of the British Army with Westphalia after 1949, an odd shortcoming for a book with an explicit interest in a seventy-year stretch. Nevertheless, its findings still help to contextualize more recent international events as British relations with Germany, and Europe as a whole, have turned away from any notion of an ever-closer union. As this volume proves, it is possible for a mutual affinity to emerge even amid irritations, antagonisms, and bitter memories of what came before.

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