

Armin Heinen, *Saarjahr. Politik und Wirtschaft im Saarland 1945–1955*, Franz Steiner Verlag, Stuttgart 1996, 603 S., kart., 148 DM.

As a participant in a larger research project on the postwar Saar sponsored by the Volkswagen Foundation and directed by Rainer Hudemann, Armin Heinen offers the first »general overview« of the Saar question from 1945 to 1955. In this nuanced analysis of French foreign policy motives in and administration of the Saar, West German *Saarpolitik*, and the initiatives of Saar political leaders and citizens, Heinen addresses the central question in the historiography of the postwar Saar: namely, why did *Saarländer* choose to reject autonomous status as a »European« state in favor of incorporation into the BRD in the referendum of 1955? After ten years of French control and separation from West Germany, he argues, »economic factors« ultimately »determined the political climate in the Saar« (S. 474), frustrated its relationship with France, and generated widespread desire among *Saarländer* to join the BRD.

Following recent work by Hudemann, Heinrich Küppers, Rainer Möhler, and Hans-Christian Herrmann, Heinen challenges longstanding arguments that French policy in the Saar was essentially colonialist, annexationist, and directly exploitative. First, he demonstrates that French aims in the Saar were far from coherent and unitary and were often contradictory: the foreign ministry in Paris shifted from a policy of reparations and annexation, to economic union with Saar autonomy, to »Europeanization« of the Saar under the guidance of Robert Schuman and Pierre Mendès-France; employer organizations in France (especially in Lorraine) viewed Saar manufacturing as unwanted competition and resisted inclusion of the region in the French national economy; and occupation authorities in Baden-Baden and Saarbrücken – most notably High Commissioner Gilbert Grandval – were often ardent advocates for Saar autonomy and self-rule. Second, Heinen points to considerable sentiment in favor of closer ties to France within the leading Saar parties and the newly established trade unions. Indeed, Saar politicians actively worked to achieve economic union with France and autonomous status as a European state and, under the leadership of Johannes Hoffmann (Christliche Volkspartei), to influence the drafting of the Saar constitution in 1947, the legal system, and numerous agreements regulating social and industrial policy from 1947 to 1954. Finally, Heinen demonstrates that rather than attempting to plunder the Saar economically, the French adopted a productivist policy toward the Saar – i. e., they actively provisioned the Saar with raw materials, higher food rations, and more laborers (via the early release of prisoners of war from the Saar) in order to increase labor productivity and manufacturing output. Consequently, both before and after economic union with France in 1947, Saar manufacturing outpaced industrial performance in the western occupation zones and the early BRD, and *Saarländer* enjoyed higher wages and more generous social insurance benefits than the West Germans until 1952/3.

Yet, despite favorable conditions for autonomy, Heinen maintains that the fledgling Saar state suffered from an »asynchronous structure of interests« (S. 221) in its relationship with France and ultimately from a lack of popular legitimacy. After the economic union, French policy-makers failed to incorporate the Saar as an »organic component« (S. 254) of the French economy, slighted the foreign trading interests of Saar heavy industry, and limited the influence of Saar officials on finance, credit, and trade policy. In addition, French administrators ran the mines with little input from local managerial personnel, resisted a corporatist industrial policy that would appease the miners' unions, and delayed resolution of several key issues, including the use of Marshall Plan funds, continued sequestration of the Neunkirchen steelworks, and French exploitation of the Warndt coalfields. The developing sense of frustration over these matters was reinforced by the »authoritarian democracy« (S. 234) practiced in the region, which was

anchored in the constitutional authority of Grandval – whose approval was necessary for all legislative initiatives and administrative orders – and French reliance on bureaucratic decision-making mechanisms that effectively excluded political considerations. In combination with the paternalistic intentions of the Saar government leaders, who were eager to suppress nationalist opposition in the region by banning organizations and demonstrations, such structures militated against efforts to build a Saar identity and resulted in the failure of new national symbols (e. g., a Saar flag, coat of arms, and national song) to take hold. Yet these structural deficits became politically significant only with the failure of attempts to gain international recognition of Saar autonomy after 1953/4 and the relative decline of regional economic performance from 1952/3 on, when the pace of economic growth in the Saar was overtaken by the burgeoning economy of West Germany.

For all its detail and nuance, Heinen's premise that changes in economic fortunes determined the fate of the Saar experiment in autonomy leaves unexplored crucial domains of inquiry relevant to analysis of political attitudes and processes of national legitimization in the postwar Saar. Despite offering brief discussions of the »nationalization« of everyday life – which touch on such issues as border crossings, customs and smuggling, the desire for BRD (vs. French) consumer goods, and the overlap of national and social antagonisms in the mines – this study never properly thematizes the evolving responses of *Saarländer* to the French; the competing concepts of German-national identity circulating in local political debates; or the complex legacies of the Third Reich. And despite recent research on postwar attempts to fashion national narratives that portrayed Germans as victims of Nazism, Heinen pays very little attention to potential continuities of German fascism and their possible links to pro-»German« nationalist groups in the Saar. As a result of this relative inattention to political culture in the Saar, Heinen relies far too heavily on the stereotype of the passive but »good German« in the Saar, motivated only by everyday economic concerns and the desire for a »return to modesty« (S. 551) as a means of explaining what was in fact a highly contested and bitter referendum vote.

Nevertheless, historians of modern Germany and Europe should welcome the empirical depth and the impressive scope of this work, which ranges from analyses of the international context of postwar diplomacy to detailed descriptions of the design of local currency, and the way in which it challenges them to think seriously about the fluid relationships between state sovereignty, nationality, democratic legitimization, and economic conditions in twentieth-century Europe.

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