

Scott Newton, *Profits of Peace. The Political Economy of Anglo-German Appeasement*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1996, 217 S., geb., 30 £.

Scott Newton's »Profits of Peace« offers a two-pronged reinterpretation of appeasement. It suggests, first, that British efforts to reach an accommodation with Nazi Germany after 1933 were part of an attempt to prolong the existence of the liberal capitalist order which had sustained Britain's social, political and economic elites since the mid-nineteenth century. Appeasement was not simply a response to blackmail but »an ambitious scheme to defuse international tension via an all-embracing Anglo-German settlement which would provide the basis for peaceful cooperation between Europe's leading capitalist powers« (S. 6). Newton argues, secondly, that appeasement did not come to an end with the outbreak of war in September 1939, or even with Germany's victories in the summer of 1940, but continued until the eve of Operation Barbarossa. The failure of Rudolf Hess's mission to Britain in May 1941 represented »the last throw of appeasement«. Ahead lay total war and, after 1945, the managed economy, the welfare state and superpower domination – the defeat, in other words, of much of what Britain's pre-war elite had fought to preserve.

Newton identifies the existence in inter-war Britain of a »hegemonic group« comprising, on the one hand, a ruling élite centred on the Treasury, the Bank of England and the City and, on the other, an expanding middle class. It was committed to orthodox finance and the reconstruction of a liberal international trade and payments system which would restore the pre-1914 status quo, both at home and abroad. At home the enemies were organised labour, industrial corporatism and state intervention; abroad they were fascism, communism and the American variant of liberal capitalism. The »liberal project« was endangered most immediately by Nazi Germany, whose foreign economic policy represented a challenge to British trade, and whose repudiation of debts threatened the stability of some of the City's leading financial houses. Nazi foreign policy jeopardised the British strategy for economic recovery because rearmament led to increased defence spending which might require unorthodox economics. The British government therefore had to seek an accommodation with Germany to secure its domestic and international objectives. Appeasement reached its climax not so much at Munich in September 1938, but in the politico-economic diplomacy which continued up to the summer of 1939 at both the official and the unofficial level: the Anglo-German coal agreement in January, the Düsseldorf industrial agreement in March; and the Wilson-Wohltat and Hudson-Wohltat talks in June/July. After September 1939, driven by hostility towards the Soviet Union, a desire to avoid dependence on the United States, and fear of the socioeconomic consequences of full mobilisation, leading members of Chamberlain's war cabinet were still seeking détente with a strong, non-Nazi Germany. Even after Chamberlain's replacement by Churchill, survivors of the »old regime«, of whom Halifax was the most prominent, were still working for a negotiated peace, as shown by the Butler-Prytz conversation of June 1940, an episode (like the Wohltat exchanges) played down by other historians. Pre-war appeasement and wartime »peace moves« were thus part of a single process, one which was encouraged and abetted by an assortment of unofficial go-betweens, some merely eccentric, others decidedly sinister. They included prominent bankers and industrialists, aristocrats, academics and intelligence operatives, some of the latter playing a double, if not a triple game.

Newton's arguments are interesting, though they are not as original as he claims. His discussion of the historiography of appeasement does not do justice to his predecessors. Few have been content to treat appeasement merely as »an aspect of inter-war foreign policy« or have neglected »the socioeconomic context in which the politicians operated« to the extent that he alleges. Gustav Schmidt's »The Politics and Economics of Ap-

peasement« (1986), in particular, seems to be saying much the same as Newton, though admittedly in a more convoluted way. The idea that appeasement continued after the outbreak of war is also familiar and was developed authoritatively in Peter Ludlow's suggestively-entitled »The Unwinding of Appeasement« (in: Lothar Kettenacker [Hrsg.], *The »Other Germany« in the Second World War: Emigration and Resistance in International Perspective* [1977]) – a study based, incidentally, on a far wider range of archival sources, both British and foreign, than Newton has used. Appeasement persisting after June 1940 is more contentious, but it is here, where Newton's assertions are most dramatic, that the primary evidence is most exiguous. There are some tantalising pieces from the Spanish foreign ministry and intriguing testimony from informants such as Kenneth de Courcy and the late Sir Peter Tennant, though Newton does not note that the latter's memoirs of his exploits in wartime Sweden, have been published as »Touchlines of War« (1992). But in the end he does not say much that has not already been said in the two books on which his wartime chapters rely most heavily, John Costello's »Ten Days that Saved the West« (1991) and Peter Padfield's »Hess: The Führer's Disciple« (1991). More worryingly, Newton may be the first historian to take seriously (as Padfield, for example, does not) the claim made by Hugh Thomas (the Welsh doctor, not the historian of the Spanish civil war) that the man who landed in Scotland in 1941, and was later imprisoned in Spandau, was not the real Rudolf Hess but a double.

Stimulating and readable though it is, Newton's book is not wholly capable of bearing the weight of its author's ambitious thesis. It is not often that one wishes a book were longer, but at barely 200 pages this one is too short. If Newton had allowed himself more space to elaborate his arguments and deploy evidence – or even to bring out more of the drama and black humour of much of his subject matter – his book would have carried greater conviction. As it stands, »Profits of Peace« is one part socioeconomic analysis, one part conventional diplomatic history, and one part conspiracy theory. It is a welcome contribution to the debate on appeasement but is very far from the last word on the subject.

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Birgit Kletzin, *Trikolore unterm Hakenkreuz. Deutsch-französische Kollaboration 1940–1944 in den diplomatischen Akten des Dritten Reiches*, Verlag Leske + Budrich, Opladen 1996, 278 S., kart., 48 DM.

Seit längerem ist von deutschen Historikern keine allgemeine Untersuchung über die deutsch-französische Kollaboration im Zweiten Weltkrieg mehr vorgelegt worden. Birgit Kletzin versucht in ihrer Arbeit eine Übersicht über die Problematik zu bieten; sie stützt sich dabei, was die Originalquellen angeht, nahezu ausschließlich auf die Bestände des Auswärtigen Amtes, die sie in den Archiven von Bonn und Potsdam konsultiert hat. Hinzugezogen werden außerdem die unter dem Titel »Akten zur deutschen Auswärtigen Politik« publizierte Dokumentenbände. Lediglich am Rande werden diese Quellen durch diverse Dokumente anderer Provenienz ergänzt (etwa Akten des Reichsministeriums für Rüstung und Kriegsproduktion des Militärbefehlshabers Belgien und Nordfrankreich). Kletzin formuliert den Anspruch, die deutschen und französischen »Wünsche und Hoffnungen, [...] Zukunftserwartungen und Chancen« hinsichtlich der Kollaboration ebenso darzustellen, wie die »Realität der Zusammenarbeit im politischen, wirtschaftlichen und militärischen Bereich« (S. 9).

Die Autorin beginnt mit einer knappen Analyse der politischen Entwicklungen im Frankreich der 1930er Jahre, die der Installierung des Vichy-Regimes den Weg ebneten.