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Patrice Arnaud and Fabien Théofilakis, eds., *Gestapo & Polices allemandes: France, Europe de l'Ouest, 1939-1945*. Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2017. 277 pp. List of abbreviations, end notes, select bibliography, list of authors, index, and table of contents. €25 (pb). ISBN 978-2-271-08945-8.

Review by Thomas J. Laub, Delta State University

Based on papers presented at a 2012 conference, Patrice Arnaud and Fabien Théofilakis have assembled a broad, provocative analysis of SS police forces in Belgium, France, and Greece during the Second World War. Contributions by editors and nine scholars analyze the personnel, behavior, and goals of SS police forces in a comparative study designed to identify common trends and explain unique features of police regimes across Western Europe. Building on research pioneered by Hans Mommsen, Gerhard Paul and Klaus-Michael Mallmann [1], contributors highlight manpower shortages that forced SS police forces to rely on local collaborators to maintain order, suppress resistance activity, and pursue the racial goals of the Nazi regime. Undermanned and loosely supervised by superiors in Athens, Brussels, Paris, and Berlin, members of the Gestapo (*Geheime Staatspolizei* or secret state police), Kripo (*Kriminalpolizei* or criminal police), SD (*Sicherheitsdienst* or SS security service), and Sipo (*Sicherheitspolizei* or security police) employed a range of methods to recruit local collaborators and cooperate with neighboring German agencies such as the German army, Fritz Sauckel's labor organization, and the GFP (*Geheime Feldpolizei* or secret military police). Police forces pursued different goals in, for example, the Ardennes, Lorraine, Antwerp, and Liège, but authors attribute regional variations to geography, Nazi racial ideology, the need to recruit local collaborators, and the incidence of resistance activity.

Ethnic and racial factors shaped SS behavior and policies as demonstrated by varied SS policy in Poland, Western Europe, and the Soviet Union. Acting on orders from Hitler, Interior Ministry State Secretary Wilhelm Stuckart developed a plan to strip territory north of a line that ran from the Somme estuary to Lake Geneva away from France, restore medieval borders of the Holy Roman Empire, and eliminate France as a threat to Hitler's thousand year Reich in mid 1940. Hitler placed the French provinces of Alsace and Lorraine in the hands of Nazi district leaders (*Gauleiters*) on 2 August.[2] Joseph Bürckel amalgamated the French department of Moselle into his district of Sarre-Palatinate and established a laboratory for Germanizing and integrating conquered territory into the Third Reich. Under the command of Anton Dunckern, a 350 man special action group (*Einsatzgruppe*) purged French nationalists from the police and civil service, persecuted real and imagined enemies of Hitler's new order, and prepared to transfer land to ethnic Germans (pp. 86-90). Taking advantage of his close relationship with Himmler, Dunckern initially directed subordinates to treat the inhabitants like Germans and try cases according to German law while avoiding systemic torture and summary executions. Under pressure from Berlin, Bürckel imposed military conscription in 1942 and stirred up resistance activity which led to a German crackdown. By 1943, Dunckern began to promote SS police officers who employed harsh methods, and new arrivals from the Eastern Front accelerated the trend toward brutality (pp. 96-98). Cédric Neveu's study of Moselle demonstrates that SS police forces embraced increasingly violent methods as the war dragged on, and chapters by Pierre Clément, Philippe Lecler, and Laurent Thierry confirm his conclusion.

Philippe Lecler examines collaborators in the Ardennes, a region like Moselle that was likely designated for Germanisation and integration. Based on their experience of occupation during the First World War, the overwhelming majority of population viewed Germany with hostility. Despite widespread Germanophobia, the SS developed a small but zealous group of collaborators who were willing to arrest Jews and suppress resistance groups. Seduced by Vichy and German propaganda, anti-communists slowly gravitated toward *Le Parti populaire français*, *Le Rassemblement national populaire*, or *Le Parti Franciste*. The most dedicated zealots eventually joined the *Milice* and fought resistance groups directly or served as informers and spies who blended into the population and successfully unmasked enemies (pp.74-76). No German soldier perished because of resistance activity in the Ardennes (p.82). Driven by a combination of greed, ideology, or a desire to escape the *Service du travail obligatoire*, about 40% of collaborators came from the working class, 23% had no profession, and almost all were male (p.80). In a brief ten pages, Lecler explains how Germany recruited and used a small but zealous group of collaborators to control a hostile population northeast France.

Studying collaborators in the Rhône, Pierre Clément identifies René Cussonac as a “precious collaborator” who enrolled, radicalized, and exploited French auxiliaries. As the police intendant in the Rhône, Cussonac actively recruited members of the SOL (*Service d'ordre légionnaire*) to work in local police forces and promoted subordinates based on personal loyalty and ruthlessness. The most dedicated members of both organizations eventually gravitated toward the *Milice* and collaborated with Klaus Barbie, the KdS (*Kommandeur der Sicherheitspolizei* or Security Police Commander) (pp.66-67). Multiple pro-German groups appealed to several segments of French society, and they provided the SS with a variety of tools to employ against the resistance (p.69). Once they worked for SS police forces in any capacity, many French collaborators became dependent on and had to regularly demonstrate their value to the Germans who supplied them with arms. Unable to switch sides or withdraw from the field of battle, most became trapped in a spiral of violence. As he delineates the progressive radicalization of French collaborationist groups, Clément extends Omer Bartov’s ‘barbarization of warfare’ thesis to areas behind the front lines and his analysis is echoed by Lecler, Neveau, and Eetvald (p.72).[3]

In a seven-page contribution, Laurent Joly succinctly describes how SS Lieutenant Theodor Dannecker, Eichmann’s chief deputy in Paris, used a combination of bluff and guile to assemble a team of dedicated anti-Semites and test methods of arresting Jews during roundups carried out in the latter half of 1941. With substantial help from French police forces, Dannecker and the SS organized, arrested, and deported 41,551 Jews from territory controlled by the military commander in France during 1942.[4]

Primarily based on records from the *Dépôt central des archives de la justice militaire*, Patrice Arnaud’s survey of SS police leadership operating within the domain of the MBF (*Militärbefehlshaber in Frankreich* or military commander in France) paints a picture of polycratic ambiguity in Occupied France. At their postwar trials, HSSuPF (*Höhere SS und Polizeiführer* or Senior SS and Police leader) Carl Oberg, BdS (*Befehlshaber der Sicherheitspolizei* or Commander of the Security Police) Helmut Knochen, and leading SS staff officers across France accused each other of being the driving force behind murderous anti-partisan policies and racial deportations after 1 June 1942. Without comparing perpetrator testimony to contemporary documents in detail, the author creates a description in which all appear to be both innocent and guilty.[5] A clever legal strategy created ambiguity that helped Oberg and Knochen escape the hangman’s noose and suggests an area ripe for further research, but it does not reveal the inner workings of SS police policy in occupied France. Arnaud also rejects army-SS conflict as a possible explanation for military participation in the 20 July 1944 coup against Hitler (pp. 29-30). Viewed from another angle, army-SS friction and fundamental disagreements within the chain of command in France might partially explain contradictory orders issued by senior political, army, and SS authorities during the latter half of the occupation.[6] Ambiguous rules emanating from superiors granted regional and local commanders a degree of autonomy which might also explain diverse army and SS behaviors across western Europe.

Robby van Eetvelde’s chapter deftly confirms the importance of racial ideology in his analysis of SS policy in occupied Belgium. Short of personnel, SS police offices in Liège and Antwerp depended upon support

from local collaborators. Using opportunists, anti-Semites, Nazi sympathizers, and captured resistance fighters who agreed to work for the SD, six SS policemen assigned to the Antwerp substation arrested and deported two-thirds of the Jews in Antwerp with support from the local municipal police (p. 130). Operating in a French-speaking region riddled with anti-German sentiments, the eight-man SS unit in Liège recruited members from Léon Degrelle's Rexist party but tolerated corruption to attract the necessary support (pp. 137, 143-145). The conscription of Belgian labor for service in Germany eventually turned Belgians against Germany, which in turn provoked increasing brutality and an orgy of violence in the waning days of the occupation (p. 123). Ethnic differences between Walloons in the south and Flemish in the north, along with Hitler's plan to gradually Germanize the Flemish population, explain disparate SS behaviors in Liège and Antwerp. Clearly organized, readily comparable to other works, and broad in scope, Robby van Eetvelde may have written the strongest chapter in this volume.

Combined into a single unit designated OFK 670 (*Oberfeldkommandantur* or Senior Field Commander), the two French provinces of Nord and Pas-de-Calais followed orders from the MBB (*Militärbefehlshaber in Belgien und Nordfrankreich* or Military Commander in Belgium) but experienced a very different sort of occupation. Falkenhausen has traditionally been described as a staunch opponent of the Black Corps who limited SS authority until 1944. Rejecting conventional wisdom, Laurent Thierry tells a story of close army-SS collaboration throughout the Occupation. After inviting RSHA to establish an office within his domain in July 1940, the MBB established a division of labor that placed the SS in charge of political and racial crimes while the GFP pursued criminal offenses such as robbery, murder, and sabotage (pp. 105-106). A year later, he requested SS reinforcements, allowed the Black Corps to make arrests under perfunctory army supervision, and used SS networks to dispatch French and Belgian suspects to concentration camps via the Night and Fog decree or the Nazi judicial concept of protective custody (*Schutzhaft*). Army-SS collaboration made limited SS security forces more efficient, shifted the odium of oppression from the army to the SS, reduced pressure to install a HSSuPF in Belgium, and helped military authorities in Belgium to escape justice after the war (pp. 117-120). Numerical weakness forced SS substations in Antwerp and Liège to rely upon local collaborators, but close army-SS cooperation allowed OFK 670 to remain in nominal control of Nord and Pas-de-Calais until the spring of 1944. Aside from encouraging army-SS collaboration, General von Falkenhausen allowed subordinates in Antwerp, Liège, and Lille to exercise considerable autonomy.

Taken as a whole, eight chapters detailing SS policy in Greece, Belgium, Nord and Pas-de-Calais, the Ardennes, Moselle, and Rhône suggest that it may be impossible to describe just one occupation in Greece, Belgium, or especially France. Divided into five zones controlled by the MBB, MBF, Italy, and two Nazi Gauleiters, France experienced at least five significantly different occupations. All contributors do a fine job sorting through a jumble of competing French and German bureaucracies to reveal a common set of at least three important themes. Throughout occupied Europe, SS police forces depended to a greater or lesser extent on local collaborators to suppress resistance activity, persecute Jews, and reorganize Europe around racial goals inspired by Hitler and outlined by Wilhelm Stuckart. Second, geographic considerations influenced German policy at the start of the occupation period. Populations capable of assimilation into or coexistence with Hitler's New Order did not have to contend with *Einsatzgruppen* in 1940, but different rules applied to allegedly inferior races that inhabited German *Lebensraum* in Poland and the Soviet Union. Third, SS police forces and their indigenous collaborators used increasingly radical methods to translate Hitler's dreams into reality. Although willing to treat the residents of Moselle like Germans in 1941, Anton Dunckern and his successors resorted to summary executions as the fortunes of war turned against Germany. The presences of resistance may have suggested the presence of foreign or alien blood that could only be purged through extraordinary violence. Geography, Nazi racial policy, and the need for indigenous collaborators shaped SS police policy across Europe.

Although it does not match other chapters at first glance, Fabien Théofilakis's chapter on Adolf Eichmann offers a fitting conclusion to both this review and *Gestapo & Polices allemandes*. Drawing on records from German archives in Koblenz and Ludwigsburg and materials held by the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, Théofilakis traces changes in Eichmann's defense between 1957 and his death 1962. During the

initial stages of his interrogation, Eichmann emphasized anti-Semitic initiatives advanced by the MBF, German foreign office, French agencies, and the Vichy regime in a determined attempt to obscure his one role in the Final Solution to the so-called Jewish Question. At his trial, Eichmann described himself as a small cog in a larger machine that did not allow component parts any room to interpret or adjust directives. Outranked by men like Otto Abetz, BdS Helmut Knochen, and Heinrich Müller, he claimed to be a functionary who circulated directives up and down the chain of command. Without autonomy and bound by an oath of loyalty, he had no choice but to follow orders. But Eichmann told old comrades a very different story during a 1957 meeting in Buenos Aires. Highlighting his own authority, the war criminal claimed that half-hearted support from the Vichy regime, amateurs within Sipo and the SD, and poor leadership by men such as Knochen had undermined his own plans, thus supporting conclusions advanced by contributors (p.191-192). New interpretations of the Holocaust will undoubtedly emerge as researchers continue to sift through local and regional archives across Europe, but SS police forces known collectively as the Gestapo will undoubtedly play a key role in every story.

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NOTES

[1] Hans Mommsen, *Beamten im Dritten Reich. Mit Ausgewählten Quellen zur nationalsozialistischen Beamtenpolitik* (Darmstadt: Primus, 2000); Klaus-Michael Mallmann and Gerhard Paul, "Omniscient, Omnipotent, Omnipresent? Gestapo, Society and Resistance" in David Crew, ed., *Nazisim and German Society 1933-1945* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 166-196; Gerhard Paul and Klaus-Michael Mallmann, eds., *Die Gestapo im Zweiten Weltkrieg: Heimatfront und besetztes Europa* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1995).

[2] “Trial of the Major War Criminals Before the International Military Tribunal”, volume VI, (Nuremberg, 1947-1949), pp. 427-429, 431, 437-439; *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, ser. D, vol. X, pp. 498-499.

[3] Omer Bartov, *Hitler's Army: Soldiers, Nazis, and War in the Third Reich* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

[4] Serge Klarsfeld, “Le Calendrier de la persécution des Juifs de France, septembre 1942-août 1944” *La Shoah en France*, vol. 3 (Paris: Fayard, 2001), pp. 1917.

[5] See Christopher Browning, *Collected Memories: Holocaust History and Postwar Testimony* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), pp. 3-36, for an extended discussion of perpetrator testimony.

[6] Thomas Laub, *After the Fall: German Policy in Occupied France, 1940-1944* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 275-277; Peter Lieb, *Konventioneller Krieg oder NS-Weltanschauungskrieg, Kriegführung und Partisanenbekämpfung in Frankreich 1943-1944* (München: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2007), pp. 273-274, 283-285.

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