

Joanna Hytek-Hryciuk: „Rosjanie nadchodzą“. Ludność niemiecka a żołnierze Armii Radzieckiej (Czerwonej) na Dolnym Śląsku w latach 1945-1948. [„The Russians are Coming“. Germans and the Soldiers of the Soviet (Red) Army in Lower Silesia 1945-1948.] Inst. Pamięci Narodowej. Wrocław 2010. 264 S. ISBN 978-83-61631-14-9.

Joanna Hytek-Hryciuk undertakes the complicated task of presenting the situation of the Germans in the Lower Silesia, concentrating on the period between spring 1945 when the Red Army seized the territory and 1948 when most German inhabitants left the territory, Russian troops were withdrawn and the power in the region began being transferred to the Polish administration. The author reconstructs the different and complicated relations between the German civilians and the Red Army and successfully analyses different phases in the policy of the Soviet army and the Polish administration against the Germans.

The first chapters cover the situation in Lower Silesia between 1938 and 1945 with short but very accurate presentations of the Red Army operations in the last phase of the war, as well as of National Socialist anti-Russian propaganda and German evacuations and escapes before the Red Army entered the territory. In the next chapters, the author analyses different phases of the relations between German civilians, Russian Soldiers and the Soviet administration. She also successfully examines the conflict between the Germans, the Soviets and the new Polish administration.

The author successfully points out the main patterns of how Soviet soldiers behaved towards the German civilians. The first phase was short but very brutal: many Germans were killed, their properties were confiscated or destroyed and many women were sexually abused. Germans were also arrested and forced to work for the Red Army. In April/May 1945, a general reorientation of the Soviet policy towards the Germans took place. H.-H. claims this period was a separate phase of German-Soviet relations in Lower Silesia; yet she describes it as a process of changes extending from wartime and postwar brutality to a symbiotic cooperation and presents many examples of how German civilians received assistance from the Red Army officers. The benefit for Germans was not only additional food rations, but also protection from the new Polish administration.

The book features interesting local examples of how the Red Army reacted towards the Polish authorities and German civilians when faced with the question of how to treat the German population. In many cases, the Red Army hindered or prohibited the displacement of Germans from Silesia by the Polish authorities. Using many examples, the author reveals the weaker position of the Polish administration relative to the Russian army commandants. She also broaches the question of economic exploitation of Lower Silesia, and discusses the transportation of goods, parts of infrastructure and factories into the Soviet Union in the context of Soviet policy towards the new territories. The book ends in 1948 when most of the German civilians had been displaced and a large proportion of the Soviet soldiers had returned home. Now Polish administration took most of the responsibility for the new territory and the power of Russian army commandants was weakened.

The book is based on numerous materials from Polish and German archives. In some parts of the book, repetitive examples and citations brake the narration. However, an impressive use of materials is also a strength of the book and gives the reader a detailed view of the life of Germans in Lower Silesia in this period.

Warszawa

Dominik Pick

Peter Pragal: Wir sehen uns wieder, mein Schlesierland. Auf der Suche nach Heimat. Piper. München – Zürich 2012. 397 S., 20 Ill. ISBN 978-3-492-05497-3. (€ 22,99.)

Born in Breslau in 1939 and forced to flee into western Germany in 1944, Peter Pragal became known during the Cold War as the first West German newspaper correspondent to live in East Berlin. Amid reports from East Germany, he always retained fascination for the former German lands beyond the Oder and Neisse. Here in his memoirs, P.