

Die UdSSR und die deutsche Frage 1941-1949. Dokumente aus dem Archiv für Außenpolitik der Russischen Föderation. Bd. 4: 18. Juni 1948 bis 5. November 1949. Hrsg. von Jochen Laufer und Georgij P. Kynin, unter Mitarbeit von Kathrin König und Reinhard Preuss. Duncker & Humblot. Berlin 2012. CXXX, 736 S. ISBN 978-3-428-13853-1. (€ 90,50.)

There are a number of unusual circumstances that surround the appearance of the fourth volume of documents on “The Soviet Union and the German Question, 1941-1949”, edited by Jochen P. Laufer from the Potsdam Institut für Zeithistorische Forschung and Georgij P. Kynin from the Historical-Documentary Section of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. First of all, K., to whom the volume is dedicated, fell ill and died before publication. Second, the Institute of World History of the Russian Academy of Sciences got involved in the project in order to bring it to fruition. From the institute, the distinguished historian of Soviet-German relations, Aleksei Filitov, joined L. in choosing and editing the documents. Unlike the earlier volumes, the fourth also liberally uses documents from outside the Foreign Ministry collections to bolster its presentation of the period, June 18, 1948, to November 5, 1949, which marks the critical historical events between the announcement of the Allied currency reform and the beginning of the Berlin Blockade and the final decisions that brought about the creation of the GDR, the dissolution of the Soviet military administration, and the formation of the Soviet Control Commission (SKK) (somewhat over half of the documents cover the period of the blockade itself, June 24, 1948 to May 12, 1949). It is important to add that no documents from the military archives could be consulted. These would certainly have illuminated important aspects of the crisis and its resolution. The editors also still faced the problem of limited access to the Foreign Ministry archives themselves, as they did in the previous three volumes. In short, these documents are not the final word on the Soviet history of the Berlin crisis, 1948/49, and the creation of the GDR. But they are the best we can hope for at present.

A final peculiarity to the fourth volume is the fact that there are two introductions, one authored by L. and one by F., and, equally unusual, two sets of notes, one for the readers of the Russian and one for the German version. (The German notes are a daunting 160 pages long!) The explanation for the two sets of notes is that German and Russian audiences need to know different sets of facts in order to understand the background of this crucial period. The reason for the two different introductions centers on the fact that L. and F., two well known and widely respected historians of Soviet policy in postwar Germany, could not agree on a common approach to setting the context for and interpreting the documents. The two introductions are not written in reference to each other or as polemics with the other’s arguments. Instead, they both seek to provide the reader with the historical and historiographical setting each believes is essential to interpreting the documents. The way F. explains it, L.’s introduction (and notes) attempt to provide a comprehensive analysis of the documents in the volume, while his own focuses on the historiographical arguments about the period, referencing those documents that highlight the veracity of one interpretation or another. The editorial decision to include both introductions is a felicitous one; we learn different but complementary things from both.

The two introductions underline the fact that the reams of newly available Soviet period documents after 1991 do not necessarily provide keys to solving the historiographical disputes that have permeated analyses of the Cold War period for over half a century. The documents in this volume are valuable because they will deepen our understanding of the seminal events that determined the German question for decades to come and provide essential material for a granular analysis of the Berlin crisis and the creation of the GDR. But the fundamental questions remain. Did Stalin intend to drive the Western Allies out of Berlin by cutting off land and railway access routes to the city from the West, as L. suggests? Or was he, as F. argues, simply interested in finding compromises with the Allies that would alleviate the worst effects of the introduction of the newly created West mark in the western zones of Berlin? Did the Soviets use the Berlin crisis to bring to fruition their

plans to build a socialist state in the Soviet Zone of Occupation, as L. implies, or were they looking to keep all-German options open as long as possible, as F. notes. L. asserts that the Soviets lost an important edge of moral superiority in the developing confrontation with the West when they used the forcible methods to stop traffic with Berlin. F. puts the problem differently; Stalin did not fully understand the importance of the propaganda battle over Berlin, and underestimated, despite Soviet warnings to the SED to seek the support of the masses in Berlin and Western Germany, the importance of appearances in the Berlin crisis. Neither F. now nor the Soviets then like to call the crisis a “blockade”. Certainly, there is plenty of evidence that the western part of the city was not completely cut off from supplies from the eastern zone.

Both editors agree that Viacheslav Molotov played an important role in trying to find a solution to the Berlin crisis, even after being relieved of his post as Foreign Minister in March 1949. The sheer quantity and depth of the Foreign Ministry’s initiatives to find a way to resolve the Berlin crisis while dealing with the perceived threat (F. thinks it was real) of the formation of an aggressively revanchist West German government are apparent in the documents. L. and F. also agree with the historiographical consensus that the Soviets were not at all interested in a military conflict over Berlin. Given the inaccessibility of relevant documents on the Soviet side, neither can really say much about contingent plans that the Soviet forces in Germany might have had if Western proposals, like those of General Lucius Clay, to defy the blockade with tanks, bulldozers, and armed units, had come to fruition. The documents do reveal that the Soviets were doing everything they could to form a reliable, well-trained, and well-armed German police force, which would serve as a surrogate for an East German army in the case of a physical confrontation in Berlin.

For students of East Central Europe, there is little new revealed in the documents. The volume reaffirms the fact that Stalin, Molotov, and the Foreign Ministry looked at the infant East German republic as something quite different from the People’s Republics that had been formed in Eastern Europe. F. notes in his introduction, for example, that not one of the documents speak about “socialism” in the SBZ/GDR. Nevertheless, the Soviets defend the SED’s interpretation of the border disputes between Poland and the SED in the Szczecin (Stettin) region. There is some effort on the part of the Soviets to mobilize the countries of the incipient eastern bloc to protest against the formation of the “Bonn Republic” and to develop trade ties with the SBZ and newly formed GDR. But these tend to be rather perfunctory and unsystematic.

Instead what we find in the documents are Soviet leaders in Moscow and Berlin aroused by the unsettled and dangerous character of the Berlin crisis and the German question, in comparison to the situation in East Central Europe where questions of power and reliability, especially after the Prague coup in February 1948, had been resolved. In Germany in this period, two simultaneous and intertwined confrontations – the Berlin crisis and the Western moves to found a West German state (followed by Soviet steps to found an East German state) – produced a storm of diplomatic activity, well represented by the documents in the volume. Stalin, Molotov, the Russian Foreign Ministry (especially the Third European Section), the Soviet Military Administration in Germany, led by General Vassilii D. Sokolovskii, the SED, especially Wilhelm Pieck, Otto Grotewohl, and Walter Ulbricht, the Office of Political Advisor, V. S. Semenov, among many other actors in the making of Soviet policy in Germany were mobilized by the mutually reinforcing crises to suggest policies, produce information documents, interact with Western diplomats, and represent Soviet interests (and those of their own institutions), while trying to reverse the introduction of the West mark in Berlin and stabilize the situation in the Soviet zone. That much larger issues were at stake are apparent by the high level and secret negotiations about resolving the problems through the lifting of the Blockade and the calling of a Council of Foreign Ministers Meeting.

The “double state formation” solved one set of problems. The Berlin question remained a central flashpoint for the Cold War until it was ameliorated first in 1961 and then 1972

and finally resolved in 1989. One can hope that the project of publishing Soviet documents on these crucial developments in the history of the Soviet Union, Germany and the Cold War will continue. In these four volumes, the editors have provided the scholarly community with an invaluable resource.

Stanford/CA

Norman M. Naimark

Neue Studien zu nationalsozialistischen Massentötungen durch Giftgas. Historische Bedeutung, technische Entwicklung, revisionistische Leugnung. Hrsg. von Günter Morsch und Bertrand Perz unter Mitarbeit von Astrid Ley. (Schriftenreihe der Stiftung Brandenburgische Gedenkstätten, Bd. 29.) Metropol-Verl. 2., überarb. Aufl., Berlin 2012. XXXI, 446 S. ISBN 978-3-940938-99-2. (€ 24,-)

Mit dem vorliegenden Sammelband wird 25 Jahre nach Erscheinen eines einschlägigen Dokumentenbands¹ eine Bestandsaufnahme versucht. Ausgangspunkt war eine Tagung Mitte Mai 2008 in Oranienburg. Sie erhob den Anspruch einer umfassenden Aufarbeitung; dieser wird vor allem in Bezug auf die Einrichtungen im Deutschen Reich eingelöst. Unter den 34 hier veröffentlichten Beiträgen betreffen sieben Ostmitteleuropa.

Die Entwicklung der Gaswagen umreißt Mathias Beer. Nach ersten Experimenten mit Kohlenmonoxid aus Gasflaschen kamen bei der zwischen August und November 1941 fortentwickelten Version Motorenabgase als Tötungsmittel zum Einsatz. Die LKW wurden zwischen Riga und Taganrog an verschiedenen Orten bei Mordaktionen benutzt. Über einen längeren Zeitraum fanden sie im Vernichtungslager Kulmhof (Chełmno) im Warthegau Verwendung. In den Kastenaufbauten sollten jeweils mehrere Dutzend Opfer den „Einschläferungstod“ sterben (S. 163), doch eine Inspektion ergab, dass die Insassen in Wirklichkeit qualvoll erstickten. Patricia Heberer schildert den Übergang von der „Aktion T4“ – dem Mord an kranken und gebrechlichen Menschen – zum Judenmord, indem sie die Verwendung des Personals nachzeichnet. So wurden 1941 bei der Vorbereitung der „Aktion Reinhardt“ 153 SS-Männer und Polizisten unter dem Kommando des SS- und Polizeiführers Odilo Globocnik im Distrikt Lublin des Generalgouvernements, 205 weitere Mitarbeiter aus anderen SS-Einheiten sowie 92 von der Kanzlei des Führers entsandte Mitarbeiter der „Aktion T4“ abgestellt. Nicht nachvollziehbar ist, warum hier von einem Krematorium in Treblinka die Rede ist, denn die Leichen wurden anfangs in riesigen Gruben verscharrt, später verbrannt. In anderthalb Jahren seien – so Heberer – in den Lagern der „Aktion Reinhardt“ 1,7 Millionen Juden durch Giftgas ermordet worden. Eine andere Berechnung legt Dieter Pohl vor, der davon ausgeht, dass zwischen März 1942 und Oktober 1943 die SS während der „Aktion Reinhardt“ etwa 1,35 Millionen Menschen ermordete: in Belzec 434 000, in Sobibór 152 000 und in Treblinka 780 000; möglicherweise seien darin jedoch die aus dem Ausland herantransportierten Juden nicht enthalten (S. 193).² Den Ursprung der „Aktion Reinhardt“ sieht Pohl in einem Befehl, den Heinrich Himmler am 13. Oktober 1941 Globocnik mündlich erteilt habe. Einer der frühesten Berichte über Treblinka stammt von Jakub Rabinowicz (nicht: Rubinowicz, S. 190) aus Parczew, der als Maurer am Bau der Gaskammern beteiligt war, doch Mitte September 1942 aus dem Vernichtungslager fliehen und ins Warschauer Ghetto zurückkehren konnte; wie

¹ EUGEN KOGON, HERMANN LANGBEIN u.a. (Hrsg.): Nationalsozialistische Massentötungen durch Giftgas, Frankfurt a.M. 1983.

² Pohl stützt sich auf die Angaben des Funkpruchs von Hermann Höfle an den stellvertretenden Befehlshaber der Sicherheitspolizei in Krakau, Franz Heim, vom 11.01.1943; Faksimile in PETER WITTE, STEPHEN TYAS: A New Document on the Deportation and Murder of Jews during „Einsatz Reinhardt“ 1942, in: Holocaust and Genocide Studies 15 (2001), S. 468-486, hier S. 469.