

Format de citation

Luyten, Dirk: review of: Vincent Artuso, La collaboration au Luxembourg durant la Seconde Guerre mondiale (1940-1945). Accommodation, adaptation, assimilation, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang Edition, 2013, in: Francia-Recensio, 2015-4, 19./20. Jahrhundert - Histoire contemporaine, downloaded from recensio.net

First published:

<http://www.perspectivia.net/publikationen/francia/francia...>



copyright

Cet article peut être téléchargé et/ou imprimé à des fins privées.
Toute autre reproduction ou représentation, intégrale ou substantielle de son contenu, doit faire l'objet d'une autorisation (§§ 44a-63a UrhG / German Copyright Act).

Vincent Artuso, La collaboration au Luxembourg durant la Seconde Guerre mondiale (1940–1945). Accommodation, adaptation, assimilation, Frankfurt a. M., Berlin, Bern et al. (Peter Lang Edition) 2013, 394 p. (Luxemburg-Studien/Études luxembourgeoises, 4), ISBN 978-3-631-63256-7, EUR 42,95.

rezensiert von/compte rendu rédigé par
Dirk Luyten, Brussels

The ambition of this book is to offer a comprehensive history of collaboration in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. This small European state was first invaded and occupied by Nazi Germany before being *de facto* annexed by the »Third Reich«. It was led by Gustav Simon, *Gauleiter* of nearby Koblenz-Trier, who became the head of the German civilian administration in Luxembourg.

To Nazi Germany, most of the Luxembourg population was seen as part of the German race and therefore had to go »Heim ins Reich«, the slogan of the political campaign of the Volksdeutsche Bewegung (VdB), the most important pro-German political movement during the war. In September 1940, the VdB started to propagate this incorporation of Luxembourg in Nazi Germany. The economy and society of Luxembourg were diverse. Coalmines and steel industry co-existed with small-scale farming and wine production. Agriculture and heavy industry were very different worlds. While the industrial working class was mainly secular, the rural regions were dominated by Catholicism. Luxembourg had a Jewish minority.

The book of Vincent Artuso reflects this diversity. The first part is a chronological overview and analysis of the mainly political collaboration. He describes how a political vacuum was created after the departure of the Grand Duchess (the queen) and the government, and shows how this gap was filled by new political authorities, the administrative and political commission. Their political legitimacy was weak, but they tried nevertheless to maintain Luxembourg's political identity and sovereignty, in a context of political domination by Nazi Germany. Both commissions were abolished in October 1940 and replaced by a German civilian administration. To facilitate and give legitimacy to the incorporation in the *Reich*, the Volksdeutsche Bewegung was established. With different means, including moral pressure and pressure in the occupational field, it became a mass movement.

One of the original views of Artuso's study is that he does not consider the collaboration as a chronological homogeneous phenomenon but identifies the evolution over time. The chronological points of rupture are primarily determined by the policy of the German authorities. A referendum disguised as a census in October 1941, and, following the granting of the German nationality to Luxembourg citizens of German origin, the introduction of conscription for Luxembourg male citizens in September 1942, which provoked a big strike, were key moments of change. The second factor that

had an impact on collaboration was the changing fortunes of war: when it became clear that Germany would not win the war, some people showed less enthusiasm to engage in collaborationist movements. The persecution of the Jews is addressed in this chronological part.

While the first part of the book focuses on the political aspects, the second has a more sociological character. Two groups who were over- and underrepresented in the collaboration – the industrial workers and the farmers - are studied more in detail. The third part of the book concerns the collaboration outside Luxemburg: the sections of the Volksdeutsche Bewegung in Belgium and France, and Luxemburg men who engaged in the Waffen-SS and their possible implication in war crimes and crimes against humanity on the Eastern front.

Artuso is not the first to study collaboration in Luxemburg. As he explains in an introductory chapter, the first publications and memoirs by actors date from the second half of the 1940s. Historical research started in the second half of the 1970s, and, apart from professional historians, journalists such as Paul Cerf should be mentioned. In recent years, more and more university students have treated aspects of the history of Luxemburg in the Second World War in their master thesis.

The research of Artuso is new in its comprehensive approach and the use of new sources. His book (initially a PhD) is based on German sources such as the reports of the German police, surveys of public opinion and ego documents of Luxemburg actors. A key source are the files of the post-war purges, which concerned a large part of the population of Luxemburg, indicating that collaboration had been a widespread phenomenon and was not limited to a small fringe of the population. This is also what Artuso wants to demonstrate: the Volksdeutsche Bewegung was, he argues (p. 357), one of the largest political movements ever in Luxemburg. He wants to challenge the vision of a passive Luxemburg population, which was forced to cooperate with the Germans, who dominated the country completely and who set up administrative structures to incorporate the country in the *Reich*. Artuso shows that, on the contrary, different segments of the population were, for several reasons, prepared to take a leading role in the collaborationist movements, to become a member or at least to support the new regime in a passive way. Material incentives (a preferential food supply, social policy for the workers, new markets for wine production), ideological affinity (extreme-right movements) and the ambition of local elites to have their say in the new centres of power, to maintain their position or to seize opportunities for upward individual social mobility, may have played a role.

The book is based on extensive research of the sources, there is a critical dialogue with the other authors and international research on the Second World War is taken into account. Artuso offers a good overview of the issue of collaboration to an international audience.

For some aspects of collaboration, this book is not entirely convincing. Collaboration is seen primarily as a political phenomenon, in the classic meaning of this concept. Artuso focuses on the Luxemburg political elites, the German administration and the political movements, such as the Volksdeutsche

Bewegung. Less attention is paid to other aspects of collaboration, such as economic collaboration and the position of economic decision-makers. The issue is not entirely absent: production of the Luxemburg industry for Germany is mentioned and economic motives are taken into account to explain the support of certain groups of the population for the German plans and initiatives. However, economic collaboration as such is not treated in depth as a specific issue. Another connected aspect is the limited attention for the position of the economic elite. What strikes a Belgian reader is the position of ARBED, a steel producer of European size and importance. Artuso shows the links of its senior staff with the right-wing Liberal Party, but except for some of the managers, the political role and impact of the group itself is not discussed. ARBED had to position itself in the new political configuration brought about by the German invasion, and was, like the other actors, affected by Nazi Germany's changing fortunes of war. From an internal political perspective, the question can be put whether the management of ARBED did not see an opportunity to redefine labour and social relations at the moment the Luxemburg political authorities had left the territory. At one point, the author (p. 284) refers to the view of ARBED on labour relations. Gaston Barbanson, president of ARBED (and a representative of the Belgian holding company Société générale) was shocked by the fact that with the introduction of the Nazi model of labour relations came a sort of shop steward, who was in this case a person working in the cleaning department. It is not quite clear what disturbed Barbanson: the introduction of a Nazi institution in Luxemburg or the fact that the workers had a representative to talk to the management.

More in general, Vincent Artuso's concern with regard to the older literature on (political) collaboration, presenting Luxemburg actors as passive subjects of the Germans, also applies to his view on the economic elite. Economic motives can explain the acceptance of the new regime by the workers, but economic collaboration is not portrayed by the author as an issue that concerns in the first place the entrepreneurs, the decision-makers where production is concerned. The entrepreneurs are too often presented as executioners of Germans decisions. On page 274, the changes made by the head of the German administration in wage policy and the introduction of a German social insurance system in Luxemburg, leading to an increase in wage costs, are discussed. The reactions of the employers *after* the introduction are referred to (reduction of working time or the number of workers), but the political impact of the employers on decision making in this field and their relationship with the German civilian administration are not discussed. Was business completely ignored by the administration? In other words, was business not taken into account as a political power and did it not want to play a political role at all? If this were true, Luxemburg would take an exceptional position compared to for instance Belgium or the Netherlands and this needs an explanation.

A more general methodological remark concerns the judicial criteria for collaboration according to the Luxemburg penal law. This is not always made clear, but has some relevance, since it is the primary criterion for collaboration and may have an impact on the content of the files of the post-war purges,

which are the basis for this research. This is especially relevant from a European perspective on collaboration.