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japonais ont conduit au désastre. Les volumes de productions de matériel de guerres sont impressionnants; les économies et les sociétés sont mises à contribution jusqu'à l'épuisement. Japonais et Allemands ont travaillé également ensemble pour échafauder des plans de contre-offensives contre l'URSS. Tous les espaces occupés par les Japonais sont revisités par l'étude historique. L'inventaire des reculs japonais et de leurs raisons est complet. L'empire japonais est mis à bas en 1945 par l'immense offensive américaine qui conduit à sa capitulation et à son occupation, mais aussi par l'emploi de deux bombes A.

Au total, l'ouvrage est une référence pour les historiens de la Seconde Guerre mondiale friands de comprendre et de suivre des pistes d'investigations neuves au sujet des grandes lignes stratégiques des belligérants qui mettent en œuvre les hommes, les économies, les politiques, les propagandes sans oublier les considérations d'ordre moral.

Éric ALARY, Poitiers

Jörg FRIEDRICH, *Der Brand: Deutschland im Bombenkrieg 1940–1945*, Berlin (Propyläen) 2002, 591 p.

Jörg Friedrich's substantial book on the bombing of German cities during the Second World War, entitled »The Blaze«, kindled a heated debate of both historiographical and moral quality. In fact, it has already sparked off the publication of a collection of critical essays¹. This suggests that the text on the book cover got it right when it promised a bit of a historiographical sensation: »Based on a wide range of source material, [the author] presents the development to perfection of the bombing weapons, their devastating effect on the ground, the traumatic experience of the population waiting anxiously in the bunkers and cellars, ... as well as the destruction of an immeasurably rich heritage. A strange gap in [the German] collective memory is finally to be filled«². In fact the blurb is almost the readers' only guide to what the book is meant to be about. Since Friedrich dispensed with any introduction or conclusion, readers are on the whole left to work out the author's intentions for themselves. Presumably Friedrich assumed that his voluminous account of Germany's destruction from the air, rich both in data as to the annihilation technologies and in emotionally touching reports on human suffering, could well speak for itself without needing a moral readily supplied by the author. Friedrich even says that the bombing warfare »is beyond any analysis«, for »in the face of the immensity of what happened, all reasoning is reduced to silence«. However, lacking any critical evaluation on the part of the author, the book presents itself more as an epic than as a scholarly »thesis«. It might well be that in so doing it is able better to fuel the imagination of the readers; but the problem is that by being put face to face with this amount of wartime destruction in Germany, the readers easily come to believe that this book has been destined to be a towering *memento* of what Germans had to endure; and as the book explains in depth how this destruction has come about mainly at the hands of the airforces of the western Allies, the reader would be forgiven for assuming that the author did not only aim at putting the record straight by presenting a hitherto allegedly neglected subject of German twentieth-century history, but also that he wanted to lay down a sizeable package of moral blame at the doors of the British and US-American war strategists.

Intriguingly »The Blaze« was serialised in a leading German tabloid newspaper. Some might want to question the wisdom of launching a sensitive historical debate on the appreciation of German wartime suffering and destruction from a journalistic pad which other-

1 Lothar KETTENACKER (Hg.), *Ein Volk von Opfern: Die neue Debatte um den Bombenkrieg 1940–1945*, Berlin 2003.

2 Translations into English by the author of this review.

wise produces articles notorious for spreading what some might call a culture of blame and shame. As post-war German historical and political discourse pivoted so much around the issue of waking up to acknowledge the suffering caused by the Third Reich everywhere in Europe, the presentation of the suffering of Germans – the suffering of the perpetrator nation, as it were – was bound to be seen as an attempt to kick off a ›revisionist‹ debate. This might be felt especially because the book appears to present the Allied bombing and the resulting German civilian suffering less in relation to the terror unleashed by the Third Reich. It rather seems to depict German suffering as being worth commemorating in its own right. Yet, Friedrich is not an author who ignores the German record of atrocities. In fact, in his previous historical work, he has frankly disclosed many Nazi-German crimes against humanity as well as the ineptitude displayed post-war Germany in bringing German war criminals and Holocaust perpetrators to justice. Thus one could argue that in ›The Blaze‹ Friedrich did not pass over German crimes against humanity; it is rather that seen against the background of his former publications dealing with these issues, he considered them as sufficiently studied not to be required always to refer back to them. Unfortunately however, this, does not prevent the book from appearing to some critics as being ›one-sided‹ and giving too much consideration to the suffering of a nation whose authorities and armed forces caused unfathomable horrors elsewhere at precisely the same time that bombs rained down on German cities. Friedrich, it must be said, does not leave his readers in any doubt as to who had brought down the calamity on the German nation in the first place. For him ›Germany's destruction is the consequence of Hitler‹. Furthermore, Friedrich is clear that bombing cities was not an Allied speciality. He characterises Hitler as ›a city destroyer bereft of the means to do it‹. If he had had the bombing capacity which the Allies finally had at their disposal, he would have been prepared to use it. This is no conjecture. The *Luftwaffe's* warfare in 1940 or the V1- and V2-attacks in the last months of the war bear witness to the German preparedness to cause as much destruction and death among the enemy's population as possible. By pointing out that ›neither the German, nor the British nor the US-American civil population condemned attacks clearly targeted on the enemy civilians‹, Friedrich explicitly makes clear that air raids were commonly accepted as a means of fighting the enemy. Thus it is suggested that his book is not a ›revisionist‹ unbalanced moral accusation of the western Allies. Having said that, the book heavily criticises the strategy of bomb warfare – especially its premise that enemy populations can be bombed into defection. ›Moral bombing‹ simply does not work. It did not work in the Battle of Britain in 1940 nor over Germany later on. Friedrich points out that in the German case the blitzed population did not rise against war-mongering National Socialism. Standing in smouldering ruins Germans turned even more to the Nazi regime; for only the government in place could be expected to offer shelter and effective assistance. Another dimension of the unceasing bombing was that people tended to give up on thinking about ›the bigger scheme of things‹ and retreated into apathy, increasingly obsessed with what Friedrich calls ›bed and kitchen table‹. He also identifies this obsession with reconstructing an immediate inhabitable environment as the link to the post-war German way of life.

Regrettably Friedrich does not pursue this line any further. He rather delves deeply into all the different aspects of material destruction. Admittedly he pays much attention to the immediate psychological impact the bombing attacks had on their victims; but as to the lasting effects of all this experienced horror, Friedrich only drops hints. As the book's title promises, readers are truly told much about ›the Blaze‹; but once the flames have finally been quenched, the narration stops. This stands in marked contrast to the bulky amount of data the author showers down on the readers as to the history of what went up in flames. Friedrich unfolds two millennia of German national history and of municipal annals, thereby opening up a vast historical dimension. He lists in minute detail what the flames consumed in those many unlucky cities. The readers should understand what cultural

wealth had been destroyed. His main point is that »all [German] cities had been destroyed at least once [in their history], but not all at the same time. When this happened in 1940–1945, a bridge to an irrecoverable landscape collapsed«. Thus the blaze is presented as a true »twilight of the gods«. In Friedrich's kaleidoscopic picture world of German cultural heritage the readers encounter the Nibelungs and Charlemagne, and unfortunately also some inaccuracies: for example Pope Gregory VII was surely a great pope but he was not Gregory the Great. Slightly more irritating is that many of these impressionist accounts out of Friedrich's German history book – and given the authors liking for archaisms some readers might assume that his textbook itself hails from the distant past – come close to retelling received historical wisdom. So we learn about the Normans' raid of Trier in 882 that »they had no time for the [cultural] rubble as they did not come to inherit anything, but they used the ancient stones to build altars for their young gods«. This is truly an understanding of the Normans as medieval as the »dark ages« themselves. In all fairness to the author it must be said that many of these antiquarian details are not simply odd excursions into the past, but that the author tries to present them in relation to 1940–1945. However these purported connections are themselves at times slightly trying, especially when the author is out to draw historical parallels. Gustav II Adolph's attempt to get the free imperial cities to defect from the emperor in the Thirty Years' War is compared with the hope of British bombing strategists to be able to blitz German cities into defection from the Nazi-regime. In a way the readers might in the end get the impression that all the chapters of German history were nothing but a run-up to the »The Blaze«. Admittedly Friedrich states that »[historical] inevitabilities are fiction«; but because of the way in which he structures his account, German history before 1940–1945 appears strangely as the »pre-history« of the great fire. The Nazis thereby seem to have succeeded in placing themselves if not as the be all but at least as the end all of German history. Yet, nearly sixty years on, we know that this was not the case; for however one wants to interpret German history since 1945, one thing cannot be denied: it did re-emerge from the rubble of »the Blaze«.

Surely, after 1945 nothing was as it was before. German history could not simply be put back on track as if 1933–1945 had only been a temporary derailment. It was at first arguably due more to the massive material destruction of Germany as inflicted by the enemies without, rather than to the immense self-inflicted moral and cultural damage, that after the war Germans had to start many things anew. But it was – not even in East Germany – a completely new beginning, as nothing in history ever really is. Thus with all its destructiveness, »the Blaze« was not the endpoint of a historical continuum. It did not put paid to German history. After the war German history re-continued, now with Germans inheriting a historical legacy arguably heavier than ever before. If links to the nation's past had been crucially severed, this was less because many of its monuments had been shelled, but due more to the Nazi ideology having hijacked German history to the extent that past »glories« seemed to have been dyed too brown to be easily referred to after 1945. Friedrich surely deserves much credit for pointing out the great historical dimension of »the Blaze«; but he could have opened up the historical dimensions not only to the past of 1940–1945 but also to post-war Germany, since it is a truism that any historical event is not only related to its past but always also to its future. Friedrich's account, not unlike the epic of the Nibelungs which he quotes, starts in the mists of the past and ends there. This is perhaps why some readers might dismiss the book as epic or even mythical.

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