

**Alix Winter, Protektionismus und Freihandel. Europäische Pressedebatten um globale Märkte zur Zeit Napoleons, Göttingen (V&R unipress) 2018, 330 S., 18 Abb. (Schriften des Frühneuzeitentrums Potsdam, 7), ISBN 978-3-8471-0769-9, EUR 55,00.**

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**Michael Rowe, London**

The focus of this book by Alix Winter is the debate about the desirability of global commerce that occurred within Britain, France and Germany at the time of Napoleon's Continental System. The evidential base is mainly periodicals from these countries, including notably the »Edinburgh Review«, the »Mercure de France« and »Minerva«. Journals like these performed a function that newspapers and books could not: unlike newspapers, they gave their contributors sufficient space and time to produce substantial pieces of reflection and analysis; unlike most books, they reached a wider audience and were consciously and to their readers obviously engaged with contemporary political issues. As such, they were crucial in shaping wider public opinion. Winter deftly uses these sources to argue, convincingly, that the French and British blockades and counter-blockades produced a new and broad consensus in support of global commerce by the end of the Napoleonic Wars.

A definite strength of Winter's study is its comparative approach. Focus on the two key protagonists in this economic war, Britain and France, makes sense given their direct involvement, the wider influence of their press, and their weight in European and global affairs. In addition, their respective journals occupied opposite poles in terms of the censorship environments they operated in, ranging from relative freedom (Britain) to state control (Napoleonic France). Germany, or rather, the German-speaking lands, reflected something of an in-between status, both in terms of the ability of journalists to express themselves freely, and politically as being something of a third party in the Anglo-French struggle. Quite sensibly, Winter's selection of German journals reflects the region's diversity, including as it does not just »Minerva« (from the north), but also »Miscellen für die neueste Weltkunde« (representing the south).

Despite some recent efforts, including notably by Katherine Aaslestad, the Anglo-French trade war has attracted less attention from historians than the narrowly military conflict. Vast numbers were obviously subject to the physical damage inflicted by war, including not least the millions of soldiers and sailors on all sides. However, the blockade and counter-blockade instituted by the British and French concerned if anything even larger numbers, given the addiction of European consumers to products such as coffee, sugar and tobacco. Debates about free trade versus



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protection extended beyond the high-political realm of strategy and statecraft, and the theoretical realm also, and instead spoke to the everyday experience of ordinary people. At the same time, debates about commerce in the Napoleonic period drew on earlier works, published in the eighteenth century, and a substantial portion of this book is devoted to covering this hinterland of earlier publications devoted to the study of commerce, and reflections on its importance and desirability as compared to domestic agriculture and manufacture.

Winter argues that opinion was divided on the eve of the Napoleonic period between champions of globalization and their opponents. There might have been definite tendencies that distinguished the British, French and German arguments, but their points of reference were surprisingly common. The Napoleonic press, as one might guess, praised import substitution and economic self-reliance, whilst British opinion tended to favour commerce as the foundation of national wealth and modern civilization, but in neither case were opinions nationally unanimous. Both the French and the British accused each other of tyranny, especially towards neutrals, a view unsurprisingly repeated in the German press with reference to both belligerents.

As to who would eventually triumph in this economic war, if anyone, the outcome remained unclear until close to the end. Indeed, up to 1810/1811 at least, it appeared that Rome (to use the analogy for France, which by then dominated the European continent from Portugal to Russia) had again bested Carthage (the analogy for Britain, which enjoyed maritime supremacy). It was only the collapse of Napoleon's Continental System, which occurred as a result of his invasion of Russia in 1812, and the subsequent destruction of his empire in 1813/1814, that tilted the balance of European opinion decisively in favour of Britain, and by extension, in favour of commerce over autarky.

This book shares the characteristics of published German doctoral dissertations. It formalistically sets out the relevant historiographical debates and methodological approach. Terms and concepts are defined precisely, and at some length. The footnotes are numerous and extensive. All this takes up considerable space, leaving the reader impatient to reach the main subject matter. However, this patience is rewarded with useful new insights not only into how opinion on globalization evolved as a consequence of the Napoleonic Wars, but also into the nature of the public sphere across three major parts of Europe.

There is much to be learned from Winter's study about the interaction between political ideas and everyday lived experience of ordinary Britons, French and Germans. Over the course of the previous century Europeans had become surprisingly dependent upon the uninterrupted flow of global commerce. The Napoleonic Wars and their assault on global interconnectedness proved all the more traumatic as a consequence. No wonder this provoked so much debate.



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