

Detlev Brunner, Martin Schoebel, Andreas Röpcke. *Die Landesregierung in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern unter sowjetischer Besatzung 1945 bis 1949: Band 1: Die ernannte Landesverwaltung, Mai 1945 bis Dezember 1946.* Bremen: Edition Temmen, 2003. 671 S. EUR 39.90 (gebunden), ISBN 978-3-86108-367-2.



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This tome has the narrowly conceived goal of describing the regional administration of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern from 1945 to 1946 through the presentation of primary documents. If you are looking for a broader interpretative sweep, this is not the book for you; but if you want access to archival research material that can underpin such a broader view, then this is an essential book. The bulk of the book consists largely of a chronological ordering of protocols of the Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands (KPD), the *Landesverwaltung*, and the Sowjetische Militäradministration Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (SMA) from May 1945 to December 1946. To say that this book is neither a social history, nor a work of historiographical analysis is no criticism because the purpose of the book is to make available primary documents pertaining to the political details of local administration. This book is an invaluable reference and an excellent point of departure for scholars researching the early stages of the Soviet occupation.

Brunner draws the documents primarily from the Landeshauptarchiv Schwerin and the Stiftung der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR in the Bundesarchiv. Ordered chronologically, the first document, dated May 23, 1945, deals with the British Military Administration's meeting with government officials and local notables. The last document, a report to the SMA

on the implementation of laws issued by the authorities of the joint occupation, is dated December 5, 1946. For the reader looking for documents on specific persons, places, or events, the table of contents and the indexes are straightforward.

In his lengthy and useful summary of events in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Brunner outlines the historical context of the more than 500 pages of documents. Brunner points out that little research has seen the light of day on the brief linkage from 1945 to 1952 of the institutions and politics of the two regions, Mecklenburg and Vorpommern. The joining of the two provinces was an artificial and new creation; at the end of the war British and Soviet forces divided the region between them with the British administering the western section. Before then, Vorpommern had been part of Prussia, while Mecklenburg had been independent. On July 1, 1945, the Soviets took control of the entire region. Thus, inhabitants of two historically distinct regions were thrown together administratively under the Soviet occupation after part of the territory had been briefly administered by the British. Such an unusual situation placed an additional burden of administrative and cultural problems on top of the existing problems caused by the collapse of the old regime, the occupation by foreign powers, and the flood of refugees. It also made Mecklenburg-Vorpommern somewhat un-

usual.

Despite Mecklenburg-Vorpommern's unique situation, many of the basic measures followed similar patterns to other Soviet-controlled areas. The SMA, for example, relentlessly pushed for rapid denazification. The SMA, moreover, clearly held the authority, intervening, for example, with a flurry of commands to regulate the fishing industry, which had fallen behind on its quota (pp. 443-446). Yet the SMA laid responsibility for the failure of policy on the German administrators. For their part, German administrators struggled to implement directives that could not realistically be implemented fast enough and which often needed to be translated into policies that worked for the region.

Subtle quirks emerge as one reads through this collection of documents. In May 1946, for example, the head of the police issued a report admitting that in the months after the end of the war a number of non-fascists worked for the police and were responsible for a variety of misdeeds. Nevertheless, denazification was taking its toll, as the reduction of the police force was straining resources for the forces of order (pp. 494-495). Similar problems existed with teachers, and the director of education argued that it would be "political stupidity" to drive teachers into "the army of reaction" when there was a serious shortage (pp. 518-519). Party and administrative officials couched these criticisms and commentaries in highly circumlocutory language; nevertheless, their complaints were clear during this period.

The juxtaposition of protocols from nearly simultaneous meetings of the KPD, the *Landesverwaltung* and the SMA that deal with shared issues helps to clarify the lines of authority and the roles of the different entities.

The meeting of the leadership of the KPD with the party editors on July 18, 1945, for example, shows the deep concern on the part of the party for the "reeducation of the entire *Volk*," including a discussion of how to present the pressing question of the harvest with a view towards winning over the population (pp. 132-133). The next day General Fedjuninski, head of the SMA, demanded a report on the harvest and bemoaned the failure to disseminate the norms expected of the harvest; presumably he wanted a scientific socialist study that would clarify the future (pp. 134-135). The *Landesverwaltung* weighed in with a discussion of how to allocate gas for the harvest. The harvest was perhaps a small social detail, but it clearly had political significance in summer 1945 immediately after the assumption of control by the Soviets. Coordination across the party, governmental, and occupation authorities existed, but was not seamless. Indeed, the reader can see that they assumed different functions, with the KPD more concerned with winning hearts and souls, the SMA more focused on asserting its control through general directives, and the district administration stuck with the practicalities. Reading the documents in proximity to one another illuminates the less than smooth functioning of the occupation administration in summer 1945.

As inclusive as this set of documents is, it is only an appetizer. Municipal records covering cultural life, business issues, health issues, and much more are also significant and provide a different point of view. Indeed, the inclusion of more diverse documents might elevate the importance of Germans in shaping policy. Nevertheless, in exposing the outline of the administration of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern in 1945-1946, this book should stimulate the researcher's palate.

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