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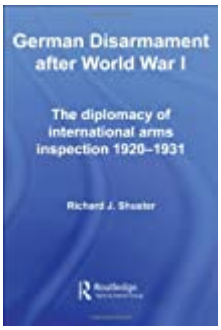

Richard J. Shuster. *German Disarmament after World War I: The Diplomacy of International Arms Inspection, 1920-1931.* London and New York: Routledge, 2006. 256 pp. 00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-415-35808-8.

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Diplomatic Trench Warfare

Richard Shuster's *German Disarmament after World War I* is a solid and very timely book.[1] This might sound far-fetched, considering that he covers the period from 1919 to 1931, but the reader will soon discover that weapons inspections in the early years of the last century were not all that different from similar efforts in modern times and were just as important. Even in our technologically advanced age, the effectiveness of disarmament undertakings–whether voluntary or mandated–still depend on the skill and persistence of the inspectors and the political will to punish violations. Then and now, weapons experts incurred the wrath of states and their organs whose national sovereignty they violated. Harassed by the armed forces at inspection sites, the specialists also contended with host governments' obfuscation and endless bureaucratic foot-dragging. On occasion, irate citizens even tried to assassinate inspectors as the representatives of a hated control regime. In one of the most notorious incidents in March 1920, Prince Joachim of Prussia led a group of Germans in the Hotel Adlon in Berlin (the IAMCC Headquarters) in an assault on two French officers who refused to stand during a spontaneous outburst of *Deutschland Ã¼ber Alles*.

The approach Shuster chose was to treat this complex issue through a combination of chronological phases or parts subdivided into functional chapters. Hence part 1 ("1919") introduces the readers to the victors at the Paris Peace Conference. The military clauses of the resulting Treaty of Versailles receive a thorough treatment–as does the machinery set up to implement them. The author also takes care to develop the divergent national agendas of the two dominant powers, Great Britain and France, who used the disarmament process as a diplomatic version of trench warfare. By the end of the first postwar year, however, the British and French had agreed on the military clauses of the Treaty that were designed to eliminate Germany's capacity to conduct offensive operations. They included limiting the number of troops, amount of war material, and fortifications of the German army. To implement this monumental task of turning Europe's most advanced land power with nearly 500,000 men under arms into a state with a standing army of only 100,000 and next to no armament production or fortifications, the allies set up an Inter-Allied Military Control Commission. This new body consisted of three subcommissions: Armaments, headed by the British; Effec-

tives (personnel), directed by the French, and Fortifications, administered by the Americans. As Shuster points out, the distribution of sub-commission responsibilities reflected each nation's respective interests in forestalling a resurgent German threat.

Part 2 ("1920-1922") is by far the longest and most important section. In six chapters, Shuster deals with every sub-commission's work separately–with two chapters dedicated to war material and war production. The last two chapters concentrate on the growing rift in Anglo-French relations and German attempts to exploit the situation. It is in this section that the functional approach loses its effectiveness. Each chapter repeats to a large extent what a previous one already stated, adding only the specific achievements of the different sub-commissions. Thus, by the time the author describes how the German government and army creatively tried to undermine the allies' efforts the reader has revisited the main issues of the two years in question five times.

Parts 3 to 5 cover in turn the Ruhr Crisis in 1923-1924, the two year rapprochement between the allies and the Germans after the Locarno conference in 1925, and the final four years before the Control Commission's dissolution in 1931. Here Shuster's narrative flows more smoothly as he focuses on the unraveling of the disarmament process. Beginning with a description of France's and Belgium's disastrous occupation of the Ruhr valley, the author carefully chooses examples to show how French insistence on the absolute fulfillment of all military clauses of the Treaty of Versailles led, in the end, to failure. French intransigence both deepened the German government's resentment of the process and alienated Britain, France's most important ally. Based on his extensive research in French and British archives, Shuster documents how Anglo-French differences over armament production and numbers of German soldiers reflected the two countries' divergent national interests at the end of the 1920s. With the world economy in dire straits, the more lenient British approach won out over French perfectionism. For Britain, an economically strong partner on the continent was more important than strict adherence to disarmament.

Meticulous description of the inner workings of the disarmament machinery in Germany, however, underscores the book's comparatively sketchy accounts of the events shaping German or British and French politics. The effects of the disarmament process and its successes on a volatile political landscape in postwar Germany receive only cursory mention. Unanswered questions about the impact of this tense climate on political leaders on all sides make Shuster's otherwise thorough account appear one-dimensional. Other elements missing from this book, such as maps, graphs, and pictures also might have enlivened the narrative. Their complete absence is all the more regrettable because visual representations of the work of the IAMCC are plentiful and would have added more texture to the wealth of information about destroyed pieces of artillery and mountains of ammunition, thus making it more accessible and memorable for the reader.[2]

Even so, Richard Shuster's treatment of the disarmament of Germany after World War I is possibly the most detailed and exhaustive scholarly study on this subject to date. Consequently, a close reading of his book adds perspective to the work of modern arms control verifications missions. In the last fifteen years alone, hundreds if not thousands of inspectors have traversed the former Soviet Union, the United States, Europe, and lately Iraq to monitor compliance with disarmament treaties and agreements. They are laboring under conditions that are very similar to those their predecessors in the IAMCC faced. With its rich primary source base, Shuster's book will serve as a great resource for researchers and students of arms control history. Major research libraries should have it on their shelves. A book for the casual reader it is not–and does not pretend to be.

Notes

[1]. The views expressed in this review are solely those of the author. They do not necessarily reflect official positions or the views of the Defense Threat Reduction Agency or the Department of Defense.

[2]. The IAMCC records for Germany include official correspondences, maps, photo-albums, and technical reports–among them French engineers' drawings of German fortifications that were later razed. They are housed in the League of Nations Archives and Historical Collection at the United Nations Library in Geneva, Switzerland (`http://www.unog.ch/library`).

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