

*Algemene Geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, XIV, *Nieuwste Tijd. Nederlanden en België 1914-1940* (Haarlem: Unieboek, 1979, 434 blz., f115,-, ISBN 90228 3800 5).

Whatever reservations one might have about the content of individual volumes, the publishers, *Unieboek* deserve the fulsome thanks of everyone interested in the history of the Low Countries for pressing ahead with an ambitious, new fifteen volume series of the *Algemene Geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, especially given the current financial climate confronting publishing houses. The previous series, published in the 1950's, whilst still containing many interesting chapters had already become dated in both content and sources so that a revision of this Standard work was long overdue. Although the volumes are seemingly published in a random order (the volume under review is fourteenth in the series, yet fifth in order of appearance) they are at least rolling of the press at a somewhat faster rate than, for example, the *Cambridge Economic History of Europe* and as inflation marches inexorably on, the fixed subscription price is making these volumes seem more of a bargain. It is therefore so much more the pity that the freedom given (or taken by?) individual authors to select the topics for treatment within their chapters (and I am not talking about the integrity, which must be guaranteed, in interpretation of those topics) coupled with a laxity, in some respects, in editorial policy have combined to make the series less valuable than it might otherwise have been.

History was kind to the editors of Volume 14 which covers the period between 1914 and 1940. At least the volume is blessed with clearly defined events delineating the beginning and end of the period covered and so avoids the problem with other volumes where some of the cut-off dates seem purely arbitrary and even vary from topic to topic. Moreover the period was either blessed or cursed, depending on how you look at it, by a broadly similar constellation of national or international problems. Economically both countries were faced with the problem of restoring the purchasing power parities of their currencies in the 1920's; both were profoundly affected by the collapse of the World economy in the 1930's, both took the decision to maintain their overvalued gold parities and both had to tackle the problems of unemployment and international competitiveness which this implied. In the area of domestic politics the conservative and socialist parties of both countries differed in their approach to these problems; both countries had to contend with political groupings with aspirations of a sub-national level as well as with emergent fascist and communist parties. In the field of international politics both countries had not only to attempt to resolve their outstanding mutual differences but had also to take standpoints on the reparations question, the League of Nations, the rise of fascism in Germany and Italy, the Spanish civil war as well as on the question of neutrality or defensive alliances. The cultural life of both were inevitably affected by the spread of education, by new means of mass communication in the form of film and radio, and by international movements in art, music, architecture and literature. Finally colonial developments were influenced by changing economic fortunes and by changing perceptions by home governments and other social groupings towards their colonial role. In short, the period covered by this volume offers almost unparalleled opportunities for meaningful insights to be gained by a comparison between the experiences of Belgium and the Netherlands. However, whatever the progress of *verzuiling* (de-pillarisation) in the socio-political life of the Netherlands in this period, academic *zuilen* (pillars) are all to evident in Volume 14 of the *AGN*. There is virtually no cross-referencing between the Belgian and Dutch chapters or allusion to a similarity or difference in standpoint between one national approach and the other. Nor is there much cross-referencing between the different thematic chapters within each country

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even though the individual authors are clearly aware of the interdependence between economy, social life, national and international politics. Now it is easy to understand how this situation arises, with individual authors given absolute responsibility for their own chapters and with little editorial time and little inclination by the authors for radically revising their texts to complement each other but nonetheless it does detract from the overall cohesion of the individual volumes in the series. It could also be argued that the intelligent reader should be able to draw many of the comparisons for himself but this is not always made possible. The most extreme example of this lies in the two chapters on socio-cultural life. The Belgian chapter concentrates on the spread of education, the influence of the church, regional cultural identities and the role of cinema. Only the last of these receives detailed attention in the Dutch chapter which concentrates rather on the achievement of university research, developments in the fine arts and the impact of cinema and radio. Both are perfectly legitimate interpretations of 'socio-cultural life' but surely earlier consultation could have led to a closer identity of topics to be covered. A similar situation prevails in the two chapters on international politics.

If these shortcomings are inevitable given the overall conception of *AGN there* is another set of problems, responsibility for which must be laid firmly at the feet of the editors themselves. I appreciate that the *AGN* is designed to appeal to the general reader interested in his country's history as well as to the specialist scholar but surely sloppy footnoting is inexcusable in a work of this sort with serious academic pretensions? Five of the fourteen chapters contain no footnotes at all whilst a further two contain one apiece. It is not as though the notes intrude on the enjoyment of the general reader since they are tucked away at the end of the volume whilst the serious scholar is entitled to demand from exactly what available sources and current state of research the material derives. In some cases the lack of footnoting is partially remedied by good bibliographies but this is not always so. The impact of the first world war on the Netherlands may not be the most active area of research but surely something has been written on the subject since 1972 and surely there are more than 16 works on the subject altogether. Similarly there must be more than 17 references on Dutch socio-cultural life!

When I first began my research into the Netherlands I was, on more than one occasion, told that the place to begin was the *AGN* and this is the attitude one would expect towards a standard work of this sort. Can this still be said of the volume reviewed here? The answer is a qualified yes, within the strictures already mentioned. The individual chapters are generally well-structured, well-written, informative and interesting and the bibliographies, with certain exceptions, provide a very good foundation for further reading. All said and done it is a good volume, it just could have been better.

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Jeroen de Vries, e.a., ed., *Tot de strijd ons geschaard. Beeldverhaal over het communisme in Nederland* (Amsterdam: Pegasus, 1979, 203 blz., ISBN 90 6143 164 6 en 90 6143 156 5).

De communistische samenstellers van dit boek hebben een groot aantal foto's bijeengebracht en er een zeer summiere tekst bij geschreven. Het resultaat is een plaatjesboek, dat wellicht enige nostalgische beking kan hebben voor oudere CPN-leden en ex-CPN-leden. De samenstellers pretenderen echter méér: 'Uitgaande van de illustraties is vervolgens geprobeerd om een zo goed mogelijk beeld te schetsen van de inmiddels ruim zestigjarige communistische beweging' (5).