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Abstract

This article analyses ho nt of view – was the most important occupied country during the Second World War. We can show that, in contrast to the conventional wisdom, there was no clear-cut caesura in Germany’s policy of exploiting occupied France – not in the extent of the exploitation in real terms or in the kind of policy toward occupation funds. Although the war in the East and preparations for the invasion made it necessary for Germany to reduce wasteful spending of occupation funds and combat French inflation more consistently, its occupation policy did not shift radically but gradually between mid 1942 and the end of 1943. However, it was not Albert Speer’s Armament Ministry, but other German institutions, especially the Reich Finance Ministry, which played a decisive role in this process. Without this policy Germany would not have been able to increase the French contribution to the German warfare all over Europe, especially on the Eastern front.

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Biographical Notes

Marcel Boldorf is a researcher at the Ruhr-university in Bochum. Previously, he has studied modern history, social and economic history, and comparative literature at the University of Saarland, followed by a doctoral degree in social and economic history at the University of Mannheim. From 1992–2004 he was academic

assistant at the economic faculty of the University of Mannheim and between 2007–10 held appointments in Saarbrücken, Darmstadt, Munich, Berlin and Frankfurt (Oder). His main publications are *Europäische Leinenregionen im Wandel. Institutionelle Weichenstellungen in Schlesien und Irland 1750–1850* (Cologne 2006); *Sozialfürsorge in der SBZ/DDR 1945–1953. Ursachen, Ausmaß und Bewältigung der Nachkriegsarmut* (Stuttgart 1998). His research interests include the industrialisation of European regions, the social and economic history of Vichy France, and the change in European economic elites after 1945 (with a focus on East Germany).

Jonas Scherner is Associate Professor in Modern European Economic History at NTNU Trondheim, Norway. Previously he studied economics and history in Mannheim and Parma, including a doctoral degree in economic history in Mannheim. His main publications include *Die Logik der Industriepolitik im Dritten Reich. Die Investitionen in die Autarkie- und Rüstungsindustrie und ihre staatliche Förderung* (Stuttgart 2008); *Eliten und wirtschaftliche Entwicklung: Kongreβpolen und Spanien im 19. Jahrhundert* (Münster 2001). His main research interests include the exploitation of occupied Europe during Nazi rule, the causes of productivity growth of German armament producers during the Second World War, and German historical statistics in the interwar period.

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