Oram (G.) (ed.), *Conflict & Legality. Policing mid-twentieth century Europe*

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Guus Meershoek

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The fall of the Soviet Empire gave rise to several comprehensive historical studies on Europe during the short twentieth century (1914-1989). It was a horrible period, dominated by war, civil war and mass destruction of soldiers and citizens. Willingly or unwillingly police forces participated in these acts of violence. In several European countries historians are examining their involvement, but transnational studies or collections of essays on European policing are still rare. One of them is *Conflict and legality*. The book consists of eight essays on policing in situations of conflict and repression, focussing in particular on Nazi-Germany and Western Europe. Policing under communism is left out. It starts with a brief introduction by the editor and ends with an essay by Clive Emsley in which he gives an overview of the subject.

Within these limitations, the book offers a nice collection of studies. There are four essays on policing in Nazi-Germany. They are preceded by chapters on the Sienese police (Italy) and the Spanish Civil Guard in the pre-war period and are followed by chapters on the Dutch police-system and on a London undercover police squad in the post-war period. Actually, one misses only an essay on French policing. The authors treat different forms of policing and approach their subjects differently, with the result that the reader is confronted with a variety of themes: police culture and the police system, military policing and undercover policing, institutional analyses and a biographical study.

I particularly appreciate three contributions. First the essay by Jonathan Dunnage on policing Siena during Italian Fascism. He draws a subtle picture of a police force that was more inclined to protect state power than to terrorize its population and that sometimes treated its enemies with remarkable leniency. Dunnage distinguishes himself by paying attention to the relations of the police with citizens. Gerald Blaney jr. describes and analyses the attitude of the Spanish Civil Guard on the eve of the civil war. When this military police was put to the test in the summer of 1936, only a part of the force remained loyal to the republican government. More than half of the force joined the military rebels. Blaney explains their desertion by their professional ideology: their devotion to public order, their distrust of the left-wing parties. Last but not least I valued the contribution of Mark Roodhouse. He describes the history of the Ghost Squad, a London based undercover unit that was active on the black markets of post-war Britain. It is a form of policing that is hardly researched historically. The author relies on some memoirs and on archives and rightly points out some continuity in British policing. Risking to be considered a schoolmaster, I want to point out that Fijnaut and Smeets, who give a thorough overview of the development of the Dutch police system, mistake the present minister of Social Affairs Piet Hein Donner for his grandfather Jan Donner, minister of Justice in the thirties (p. 159).

The contributions were originally presented as papers at a conference of the Open University in Milton Keynes. Unfortunately, I was hardly able to notice benefits from a common discussion. I even consider the main theme, stressed by Gerard Oram in his introduction and expressed in the title *Conflict and legality*, confusing, if not a serious obstacle to more in-depth knowledge. Oram mixes up legality and legitimacy. The members of the Spanish Civil Guard didn't question the legality of the government (p. 16) but its legitimacy. In Weimar-Germany, anti-Semitic acts

of violence infringed the rule of law but their toleration by the police only distorted the legitimacy of the state with the Jews: it didn't undermine the state and its legitimacy with the population (p. 17). I don't consider legality a sensible concept to compare and understand European policing, because legal traditions differ widely in Europe and formal rules and regulations only play a minor role in determining police practice. In addition, I regret that, apart from Dunnage, the editor and most authors fail to appreciate the importance of police interaction with civil society, even or maybe especially in authoritarian and totalitarian political systems. One misses badly themes like denunciations by citizens and the impact of moral panic on police personnel.

The collection of essays is rounded off by Emsley with an attempt to recognize some similarities and differences in policing in Europe during the 20th century. This kind of effort is rare. Earlier comparisons restricted themselves to national police systems. Emsley can only lean on patchy knowledge, so one can but expect limited results. He correctly resists the temptation to think that policing in dictatorships totally differs from policing in democracies and points out important similarities in institutional reactions on war and the threat of war, in public relations and in moral dilemmas of individual policemen confronted with dictatorship. These similarities may in the distant future offer starting points for a comprehensive study of policing in Europe.

Guus Meershoek
Twente University
Cubicus Building - PO Box 217
NL-7500AE Enschede

Eyerman (Ron), *The Assassination of Theo Van Gogh. From Social Drama to Cultural Trauma*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2008, 220 pp., ISBN 9 780822 344063.

Ron Eyerman is a Yale sociologist, presumably with Dutch roots. His previous publications deal with a wide range of subjects; this book is about a recent event with repercussions throughout the world. Let me recall, for readers not living in the Netherlands: Theo van Gogh, a well-known film maker, tv host and publicist, was murdered on November 2, 2004, while riding his bike in the early morning. Muslim radicals hated him for directing the short film *Submission*, meant to denounce the treatment of women under Islam. The initiative for that movie had come from Ayaan Hirsi Ali, a Somali refugee and member of the Dutch parliament. Whereas her security was upheld in a full-scale protection program, Van Gogh, with characteristic bravado, had always refused protection. The killer, Mohammed Bouyeri, was a second-generation Moroccan immigrant who had been in contact with other Islamic radicals. With a knife he pinned a note, directed at Hirsi Ali in particular, on the victim's dead body. The murderer had hoped to be shot by the police and become a martyr, but he was arrested and sentenced to life imprisonment. The issue of terrorism and the fact that the victim was the great-grandson and namesake of Vincent van Gogh's brother ensured international publicity for the case.

A murder like this calls for a meticulous examination of its political and socio-cultural context, which Eyerman provides, along with an analysis of the trauma that the event supposedly caused among the population. The book contains a number of