

H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Tryntje Helfferich, ed. and trans. *Thirty Years' War: An Anthology of Sources*. Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co., 2009. 352 pp. \$42.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-87220-940-4; \$14.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-87220-939-8.

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Commissioned by Benita Blessing



Documenting the Thirty Years' War

It is well known that we need more translations of primary sources for the early modern era. The paucity of English-language material for this period in history is a problematic lacuna. The *Thirty Year War: A Documentary History* responds exactly to this problem that I have often talked about. With Tryntje Helfferich's book, an instructor looking for teaching material can now turn to a collection of documents that illustrate many important aspects of the war.

Helfferich's book is divided into four sections. Section 1, "Outbreak of the Thirty Years War," deals with the immediate events in 1618 that began the war and includes documents up to 1623. The second section, "The Intervention of Denmark and Sweden," covers the phase of the war when Denmark intervened and was defeated, resulting in Catholic dominance. This section includes the Edict of Restitution and documents relating to Sweden's intervention in the war along with Emperor Ferdinand's problems with Albrecht von Wallenstein—which ultimately led to the general's assassination. The Long War's third section begins with the failed Peace of Prague and demonstrates how the war dragged on. This section ends with important excerpts from the Treaty of Westphalia.

In the last section, "Two Wartime Lives," the reader is treated to two diaries from contemporaries who lived during the war. One diary, written by a soldier, Peter Hagedorf, describes his experiences being caught be-

tween Catholic and Protestant sides in the war. Here, Helfferich offers a real-life example of what one finds in Hans Jakob Christoffel von Grimmelshausen's 1668 classic, *The Adventures of a Simpleton*. Grimmelshausen's main character, Simplicissimus, moved between Protestant and Catholic camps numerous times. With Hagedorf's piece, the reader has a first-hand account of how complicated confessional relations could be for soldiers in a war ostensibly fought because of religion.

This book's title is disingenuous, however, because it only deals with events in the main theater of the war—Central Europe. There were clearly other theaters to be considered. The choice of documents is good, but the author could have used news accounts of the war to broaden the range of the primary sources she presents. This approach would have provided students with a chance to follow the early news media, for instance, and also to observe how misinformation was disseminated. An example of such a source could have been Samuel Adam's *A True New News Report from Bohemia on the Siege, Taking, and Conquest of the Catholic City of Pilsen* from 1618, which was mostly fabricated. Some material following the efforts of Catholic territories to use the Edict of Restitution as a pretext to reclaim lost lands would also have been useful. Similarly, I would also have liked to see some documents dealing with the papacy, especially in regard to the peace negotiations at the end of the war that led to the Peace of Westphalia. These criticisms are quibbles. Helfferich has completed a Herculean task of trans-

lating many important documents, providing a window into the Thirty Years War. In each of these sections, she provides source material for the grand politics as well as eyewitness reports, and sources that deal with everyday life. This book is a must for students in an upper-level course that deals in any depth with the Thirty Years War.

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