

## **Annan, Noel. Changing Enemies: The Defeat and Regeneration of Germany. New York: W.W. Norton, 1996.**

**Gary Bruce**

Volume 18, numéro 1, spring 1998

URI : [https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/jcs18\\_01br11](https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/jcs18_01br11)

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

The University of New Brunswick

ISSN

1198-8614 (imprimé)

1715-5673 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce compte rendu

Bruce, G. (1998). Compte rendu de [Annan, Noel. Changing Enemies: The Defeat and Regeneration of Germany. New York: W.W. Norton, 1996.] *Journal of Conflict Studies*, 18(1), 176–178.

**Annan, Noel.** *Changing Enemies: The Defeat and Regeneration of Germany.* New York: W.W. Norton, 1996.

Lord Annan's professional relationship with Germany began in December 1941 when, fresh out of officer cadet training, he was posted to MI 14, the German department in the British Military Intelligence Division of the War Office. For the duration of the war, Annan was involved in the analysis of documentation collected by British sources on the Third Reich, including the decoded ciphers of Bletchley Park and reports of agents in occupied Europe. Annan's relationship with Germany continued following the war. As a member of the political division of the British Control Commission in occupied Germany, Annan was responsible until his departure from Germany in 1946 for analyzing the emerging German political situation. *Changing Enemies*, a memoir which incorporates the main literature on the field and some primary sources, provides a balanced account of the contributions of British intelligence to defeating the Third Reich, and of the role played by British occupation authorities in establishing a democratic Germany.

Annan's description of his time in British intelligence during the war demonstrates a truism of the intelligence field: the challenge in intelligence analysis is to transform the myriad of raw intelligence reports into a useful product. There are, of course, no guarantees that the end product will be employed properly. Such was the case regarding intelligence on a possible German offensive against the Soviet Union. By the summer of 1941, Annan and the other analysts of MI 14 were convinced that Germany would attack the Soviet Union, based on Ultra decrypts and information from the Polish network. Despite overwhelming evidence to the point that Bletchley analysts in June 1941 declared that a German attack on the Soviet Union was imminent (p. 28) Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth Strong, chief of MI 14, General Francis Davidson, Director of Military Intelligence, and the Joint Intelligence Committee refused to heed the warnings of an attack on the Soviet Union. Intelligence was unable to break their conviction that Hitler would not be foolish enough to attack the Soviet Union. Annan's discussion of the Crete invasion provides another example of the squandering of useful intelligence. The loss of Crete was deeply troubling to MI 14 for, as Annan writes, "on the sole occasion on which intelligence gave our commanders a cast-iron guarantee of success, they had failed." (p. 34)

British intelligence analysis also met with failures. In discussing the inability of the Joint Intelligence Staff to predict Hitler's firm stand in Italy in 1943, Annan candidly acknowledges that British intelligence underestimated the German ability to improvise, to create fighting units out of service troops or auxiliary units. (p. 74) The failure of the intelligence department of SHAEF (G2) which Annan had joined in August 1944 to foresee the Ardennes offensive of December 1944 also receives attention. Annan places the blame here squarely on the failure of intelligence officers to warn General Omar Bradley that a German counter-offensive was a likely eventuality for which the Allies should be prepared, not just a "possibility." Annan explains: "To give options including the 'worst case' is bad intelligence. Intelligence officers must give their commanders a clear lead, right or wrong, about what they think the enemy is likely to do." (p. 123)

Annan does not shy away from contentious debates. He challenges Harry Hinsley's view that saturation bombing was an appropriate strategy for breaking the morale of the German people. He also takes issue with historians who argue that Overlord should have been launched in place of the Italian invasion. Annan suggests that the lessons learned from Torch, combined with the resources drained from Germany in its efforts to keep Italy, were integral to Overlord's success. (pp. 105-06) On the debate regarding the German resistance to Hitler, Annan argues that the failure of Major Claus von Stauffenberg's assassination attempt was not due to indifference on the part of the British intelligence community. Annan asserts that the British response to overtures from the German resistance had no effect on the resisters' plot. Curiously, Annan does not address the debate regarding Western knowledge of the Holocaust. Annan states only: "In intelligence, we knew of the gas ovens, but not of the scale, the thoroughness, the bureaucratic efficiency with which Jews had been hunted down and slaughtered. No one at the end of the war, as far as I recollect, realized that the figure of Jewish dead ran into millions." (pp. 147-48) Considering that this debate is far from resolved, Annan's tangential reference to intelligence on the Holocaust is disappointing.

Annan's account of his time in the British Control Commission in occupied Germany is equally as riveting as that of his wartime service. As an employee of the political division of the British Control Commission, Annan was closely involved with German political developments. He played an important role in reviving Konrad Adenauer as a political figure, after the British Military Government fired him from his position as Lord Mayor of Cologne. Annan's conduct should not be taken as a sign of favoritism toward Adenauer's Christian Democratic Union. Annan was a firm supporter of the Social Democratic Party of Germany and urged Social Democrats in Berlin to resist fusion with the Communist Party. His efforts were rewarded with a convincing and as Annan reveals, surprising victory by the anti-fusionists at the 31 March 1946 Berlin referendum on fusion. Annan's support for a strong Social Democratic Party stemmed from his fear that the left in Germany might turn to the Communist Party.

Annan's efforts to revive German politics ran, on the whole, contrary to the prevailing view of the British Military Government. British authorities in Germany initially discouraged German political activity, believing that Germans had to be 'taught' democratic politics over a lengthy period of time. Annan is quite correct to stress the colonial mentality of the British occupiers. This explains in part why German politics developed comparatively slowly in the British zone of occupation. The attitude of British authorities toward German politics unsettled Annan: "The hostility of Military Government to any kind of German political initiative bothered me." (p. 162)

*Changing Enemies* describes other shortcomings of the British occupation. Annan stresses the cumbersome and often ineffective policy of de-Nazification, and laments the number of Nazis who escaped unpunished. (p. 208) He describes British attempts to reform the German university system as a "spectacular failure." (p. 161) In the end, Annan acknowledges the important role of the British Military Government in the resurrection of a democratic and peaceful Germany, despite certain failed policies.

Annan provides an honest evaluation of the pitfalls of British occupation balanced with recognition of the enormous challenges faced by the British occupation authorities.

*Changing Enemies* is a welcome addition to the literature on wartime British intelligence and the post-war British occupation of Germany. Above all, it provides marvellous insights into the personnel involved in this dramatic era. Annan's discussion of the importance of Churchill and Roosevelt's persona to the war effort stands out as a moving tribute. (p. 133-36) Historians who lament the relegation of historical actors to faceless bureaucrats toiling within structural forces over which they have no control will warmly embrace Annan's account.

Gary Bruce  
McGill University