

*Königliche Gewalt — Gewalt gegen Könige. Macht und Mord im spätmittelalterlichen Europa*, hrsg. Martin Kintzinger und Jörg Rogge, Berlin 2004, Duncker und Humblot, 143 pp., index of persons, geographical names and subjects, *Zeitschrift für historische Forschung*, Beiheft 33.

The volume in question is the result of the debates of a section of the 44th Deutscher Historikertag held in Haale an der Saale in September 2002. The section discussed the roots and development of conflicts between the authority and society and manifestations of the consequent violence at the end of the Middle Ages (mainly in the 14th and 15th centuries). In addition to the introduction written by the two editors, the volume contains five papers, four of which are German while one is English. These are: Jörg Rogge (Mainz), *Attentate und Schlachten. Beobachtungen zum Verhältnis von Königtum und Gewalt im Deutschen Reich während des 13. und 14. Jahrhunderts*; Christopher Allmand (Liverpool), *Opposition to Royal Power in England in the Late Middle Ages*; Martin Kintzinger (Münster), *Maleficium et veneficium. Gewalt und Gefahr für den Fürsten im französischen Spätmittelalter*; Winfried Eberhard (Leipzig), *Gewalt gegen den König im spätmittelalterlichen Böhmen. Adeltiger Widerstand und der Ausbau der Herrschaftspartizipation*; and Gurt Merville (Dresden), *Ein Exkurs über die Präsenz der Gewalt im Mittelalter. Zugleich eine Zusammenfassung*.

As the titles indicate, the research area included four countries: Germany, France, England and Bohemia. This is not much, considering the number of European countries, and it is a pity that Italy and Spain, on the one side, and Scandinavia, Poland, Hungary and the Grand Duchy of Muscovy, on the other side, have not been taken into consideration. Only then could one really speak about the late medieval Europe mentioned in the title, and the material for comparisons would be much richer. The authors discuss the development of the most important conflicts between rulers and society and analyse how tyrannical or inept kings and their pejoratively assessed advisors and favourites were eliminated by assassination (murder, poisoning) or by a settlement on the battlefield. The most frequent reasons for an individual or collective violent settlement were rivalry for the throne and dynastic conflicts, abuse of power and infringement of the subjects' vital interests by the ruler, and more seldom ethnic and religious conflicts. The authors recall in an interesting way the medieval theories about the origin and character of royal power as well as the mutual dependence and the rights and duties of both the ruler and society (Thomas Aquinas, Jean Petit, John Salisbury, William of Occam, Heinrich von Geist). Party strife and the development of the theory that society has the right to come out against abuses of power led to the justification of violent measures, including physical elimination of political opponents; this question has been discussed in detail, especially with regard to France and England. A comparison of the materials presented by Ch. Allmand and W. Eberhard may lead to the conclusion that partnership between the authority and society developed first, and the most intensively, in England and Bohemia.

The volume contains interesting attempts to classify manifestations of violence in late medieval political life and to compare them with political violence in the 20th and 21st centuries (totalitarian systems, nazism and communism,

World War II, the terrorist attack in New York on September 11, 2001). In his extremely interesting summing up G. Malville writes about the ritual of violence in a broad historical perspective up to the present day and about the omnipresence of violence in mankind's history. He presents various forms of the use of force and violence against human being, beginning with God's punishment and Biblical stories, but he has left out two important categories of violence: 1. the conquest of a country (or a people) and its subjugation by another country/people, and 2. sexual abuse (including rape) of women, a characteristic feature of patriarchal culture. These two categories of violence were present not only in the Middle Ages; they have existed in all epochs, from ancient times up to the present century.

The book ends with the statement that eruptions of individual and collective violence, tolerated and even justified by general legal, political and social acceptance, were a characteristic feature of the Middle Ages. This turned the medieval people into participants in a big spectacle of cruelty (*theatrum crudelitatis*). But can we say that violence was confined to the Middle Ages?

Maria Bogucka