

- 6 In its emphasis on historical events and the role played by individuals, Dr. de Jong's work is not likely to find favour with many devotees of the social and economic historiography as practised by the French historians of the *Annales*. But it is now increasingly recognized that our understanding of the past is as much furthered by the writing of the so-called *histoire événementielle* as by studies analysing long-term social and economic developments.

Nor is it fair to belittle his achievement by characterizing it as an almost predominantly narrative account for it abounds in serious, frequently very successful attempts to explain the course of events. More justified is the criticism that in some instances he insufficiently indicates the important problems still to be explored, or is not entirely convincing in his statement because he fails to provide a sufficient amount of supporting evidence. He has also not been very successful in illuminating the relationship between the wartime behaviour of the Dutch nation and the earlier course of Dutch history. This weakness is most pronounced in Dr. de Jong's first volume which does not entirely fulfill its main objective of characterizing the political, economic and social conditions of the Netherlands in the inter-war period, even if it does throw new light on many important events of that era. The title of this Volume, *Prelude*, indicates the over-emphasis given to the various developments accounting for the military debacle of May 1940, and the author's failure to bring out the fact that during this period the Dutch nation was developing along lines peculiarly its own which were brutally interrupted by the German invasion rather than, as the author implies, almost inexorably leading to this disastrous *dénouement*.

Although one may deplore an occasional lack of proper perspective or object to the style or contents of various statements which are more clearly intended for the general reader than the professional historian, it would be preposterous to deny that Dr. de Jong has produced a study of major significance. Besides being a work of *haute vulgarisation* it greatly adds to our knowledge and insight on many important topics. Deeply concerned with the psychological impact of the German occupation upon the Dutch nation, the author has written a case-study of the behaviour of society under great stress. As such his study will be of help in understanding the more normal conditions that certain characteristics of a nation, its strength as well as its weakness, reveal themselves most clearly. Dr. de Jong's work should also be essential reading for historians of the German occupation in other European countries, on which no scholarly work of a similar scope has as yet been written, for the manifestations of the German policies of Nazification and exploitation in all occupied countries and the popular reactions to these German measures are in many ways remarkably similar. In more general terms he has made a contribution to our understanding of the phenomenon of political tyranny, both in its oppressive features and in the frequently overlooked opportunities it still offers to combat it effectively. The