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New Light on the Darkest Chapter in German Military History

For over a generation after the Second World War, German atrocities in western Poland, the Balkans and the Soviet Union were generally attributed to the SS. The German Army was widely regarded as having refrained from actions contrary to the laws of war. However, the army's role came under increasingly critical scrutiny during the 1960s and 1970s. In 1979, the Military History Research Institute of the Ministry of Defense of the Federal Republic of Germany began publication of its projected ten-volume history of the war, a series providing a peerlessly objective, comprehensive and authoritative account of *Germany and the Second World War*.^[1] The first three volumes, on the origins and early phases of the conflict, revealed the army's full complicity in planning and executing a ruthless war of aggression, and the fourth volume, on the background and course of the war against the Soviet Union through early 1942, documented the participation of the army in an unprecedented war of annihilation. The publication of this volume, reissued as an affordable paperback, triggered outrage in some German circles—especially among those who saw the Cold War as a virtual extension of their country's heroic but tragically unsuccessful anti-communist cru-

sade against the Soviet Union.^[2] But the controversy over this 1,172-page monument of historical scholarship did not engage the general public, nor did increasingly critical works published during the following years. A fundamental change in German public opinion came only in the 1990s, with the traveling Wehrmacht Exhibition of photographs assembled by the Hamburg Institute for Social Research, which illustrated the German Army's involvement in atrocities previously attributed to the SS and its auxiliaries.

In this fine work, Wolfram Wette explains how the German Army came to play its terrible role in the East, how that role was downplayed or denied during the postwar period, and how it has recently become more widely acknowledged in Germany. His approach is clearly indicated by the subtitle of the original German edition: *Feindbilder, Vernichtungskrieg, Legenden*.^[3] To understand why the German army's senior generals were prepared to engage in an unprecedented war of extermination—something utterly contrary to the law of war and their own military tradition—the book begins with an analysis of the German perception of Russia since

the beginning of the twentieth century and then shows how, in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution and the German defeat in the First World War, ideologically radical nationalists conflated anti-communism and antisemitism into the sinister image of Jewish-Bolshevism—a conception Adolf Hitler adopted and intensified, but by no means invented.[4] Wette writes that in the course of the 1920s and 1930s, the perception of the Soviet Union as a mortal threat came to be accepted by most of the leaders of the German Army, so that, by spring 1941, those with misgivings about Hitler's impending attack on Russia were isolated and "unable to change the course of official policy in any phase of the war" (p. 23).

Turning to antisemitism in the German military, Wette describes antisemitic bias in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Prussian officer corps. Jews did not receive regular or (after 1885) even reserve officers' commissions in the Prussian Army (though they occasionally did in the Bavarian and Saxon armies). The traditional antisemitism of the nineteenth century was confessional rather than racial; persons of Jewish descent whose forebears had adopted Christianity and become assimilated into German society—like the family of Fritz-Erich von Lewinski, who took the name Erich von Manstein by adoption—were not subject to the discrimination endured by Jewish relatives (pp. 74-75). By the end of the nineteenth century, however, a radical variant of racial antisemitism emerged, based on racial ideology. It found increasing acceptance in the German Army during World War I, as illustrated by the notorious Jewish census of autumn 1916: the Prussian minister of war ordered statistics to be gathered on the number of Jewish soldiers serving in the Prussian Army. The results belied the antisemites' assumption that the Jews were not doing their part, so the findings were not released during the war. Only later did it become known that the statistics demonstrated that, proportionally, as many Jews bore arms during the war as non-Jews (p. 37). But the rumors generated by the Jewish census reinforced the tide of racial antisemitism, which, after Germany's defeat, was intensified by allegations by right-wing politicians and former military leaders. General Erich Ludendorff, former chief of staff in the German Army's supreme command, was among the most conspicuous proponents of the myth that Jews joined with socialists and Bolsheviks to undermine the war effort, with the consequence that Germany had in fact not been defeated at the front, but stabbed in the back. It was thus no accident, Wette notes, that when Hitler emerged with his allegation that Jews and Bolsheviks were Germany's most dangerous

enemies, Ludendorff joined him in the attempt to overthrow the republican government in 1923 and, after its failure, ran for and was elected to the Reichstag, where he served as a National Socialist deputy until 1928. Wette recounts that during the period 1918-33, antisemitism persisted in the German Army, that militarism flourished among veterans' groups and patriotic associations and that fanatical nationalism and racial antisemitism led to a wave of assassinations. In 1925 widespread respect for the military was reflected by the election as president of the aged Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg. When Hitler became head of state and supreme commander of the Armed Forces upon Hindenburg's death, its members promptly took a solemn oath of obedience to him personally.

Within less than a year, well before the enactment of the Nuremberg Laws, the commanding general of the German Army, Baron Werner von Fritsch, directed that officers should marry only women of "Aryan" descent. Early in 1939, the High Command of the Wehrmacht began an indoctrination program for the rank and file of all three service branches. One instructional text circulated among the troops was a vitriolic diatribe against the Jews, rehashing antisemitic propaganda since the Jewish census of 1916, and concluding that the struggle against Judaism was necessary in the quest "for a new and more just world order" (pp. 84-88). The ideological solidarity reflected in Fritsch's antisemitism and the adoption of this training program did not mean that there was no friction between Hitler and his generals during the 1930s. "Members of the military elite expressed doubts about Hitler's radical war strategy," Wette writes, "as General Ludwig Beck did, for example, in 1938" (p. 153). Shortly after the war began, protest arose from two senior generals "against the liquidations carried out by the SS forces that had marched into Poland with the German army" (p. 101).[5] In Serbia, on the other hand (invaded in spring 1941), Wette points out, the German Army took matters into its own hands, killing thousands and "disguising the measure as the 'execution of hostages'" (p. 103). All of Serbia's Jews were dead within a year.

However, the crucial test of the unconditional loyalty of the German military leaders to Hitler and his radical ideological goals was to come with the campaign against the Soviet Union. Twelve weeks before the attack, Hitler summoned to the Reich chancellery the approximately 250 generals commanding the three-million-man force that would invade Russia. In an almost two-and-a-half hour speech he made it clear that the forthcoming struggle, code-named Operation Barbarossa, would be drasti-

cally different from the war in the West. The Wehrmacht was to ignore the traditional comradeship-in-arms between soldiers of opposing armies, for this was to be a war of annihilation with the goal of exterminating the “Bolshevist commissars and the Communist intelligentsia” (p. 91).

Wette writes that in the postwar trial of the German High Command at Nuremberg, participants in Hitler’s conference testified that commanders had afterwards protested that Hitler’s planned extermination would violate their soldierly principles and undermine discipline, whereupon Field Marshal Walther von Brauchitsch, the Commander in Chief of the Army, had agreed to convey their misgivings to higher authority and had actually tried to bring about a change in policy through the Chief of the High Command of the Wehrmacht, Wilhelm Keitel, but did not succeed (p. 92). Although research on this episode in the 1960s led to the testimony in question being discounted as self-exculpatory, further study at the Military History Research Institute in Freiburg during the 1970s and 1980s confirmed that there had indeed been objections, even though they had not deterred the preparation by the High Command of the Armed Forces (Oberkommando der Wehrmacht, or OKW) and the High Command of the Army (Oberkommando des Heeres, or OKH) of a series of orders subsequently judged to have been criminal.[6] On April 28, 1941, the OKH ordered army collaboration with the SS in the campaign: special SS units had sole responsibility for carrying out their missions, but were under the authority of the army with respect to marching orders, food and shelter. In other words, the German Army was to cooperate in carrying out the kind of mission against which two generals had bitterly protested in Poland in 1939 and about which some expressed misgivings following Hitler’s conference. Hitler’s decree of May 13 on the exercise of court-martial jurisdiction in the area of Barbarossa licensed such harsh conduct toward civilians that German soldiers knew they could treat civilians as they pleased without punishment. On May 19, the OKW called upon soldiers to eliminate all resistance ruthlessly, particularly Bolshevik agitators, partisans, saboteurs and Jews (p. 94). And an OKW order of June 6 with an OKH supplement of June 8 directed that political commissars should be summarily shot.

Among concrete cases of Wehrmacht involvement in massacres were two in the early months of the Russian campaign near Kiev, in the area controlled by Field Marshal Walter von Reichenau’s Sixth Army, accompanied by SS Special Command 4a under SS-Colonel Paul Blobel

(p. 113). The circumstances of the August 1941 massacre are documented because of futile efforts to prevent it by a German Army staff officer. On August 20, 1941, in Belaya Tserkov, two German Army chaplains informed the First General Staff Officer of the 295th Infantry Division, Lieutenant Colonel Helmuth Groscurth, of the pitiful plight of children brought to their attention by soldiers who had heard them crying in a school in which they had been locked for days without food. At the school, Groscurth was informed by an SS sergeant that the children were to be shot, as their parents had been. Groscurth arranged for a postponement while he appealed the decision. When he telephoned the staff of Army Group South he was referred to the headquarters of the Sixth Army, from which he elicited a promise that a decision would be sought by evening from the army’s commander. Reichenau promptly decided that the action should be effectively concluded, but contacted Blobel and ordered it postponed because it had not been properly handled. He directed that the SS-colonel go with a representative of the Sixth Army High Command to Belaya Tserkov the following morning. The next day the children were executed. In a letter to his brother a few months later, Groscurth wrote of Reichenau and his like: “One can’t view the responsible people with anything but the deepest contempt. Because this is so, Germany will be destroyed; I no longer have the slightest doubt of that” (pp. 107-111).

The Babi Yar massacre near Kiev in September 1941 was “the largest single case of mass murder that took place under the aegis of the German Army, namely the high commander of the Sixth Army, Field Marshal von Reichenau, during its war of conquest and annihilation against the Soviet Union,” according to Wette.[7] A few days after the occupation of Kiev, downtown buildings were blown up, killing hundreds of members of the Wehrmacht. On September 26, SS and Wehrmacht officers met and decided that as a reprisal the majority of the Jews in Kiev should be killed. In trial testimony long afterwards, a former SS officer at the meeting described the division of labor between the SS and Wehrmacht by saying that “We had to do the dirty work. I will never forget how ... [Brigadier General Kurt] Eberhard said to us in Kiev, ‘You have to do the shooting’.”[8] However, Wette continues, “not only did the general have no objections to the plan for the massacre as such, but, given the ongoing arson attacks, he was actively promoting it, as an SS report to Berlin confirms: ‘The Wehrmacht welcomes the measures and requests a radical approach’” (p. 115). At Babi Yar, as the SS subsequently reported, 33,771

were shot to death on September 29 and 30 (pp. 112-117). This action was followed in October and November 1941 by the first major ghetto massacres, carried out under the orders of Brigadier General Anton von Bechtolsheim, the Wehrmacht commander in Belorussia, ostensibly to eliminate resistance. However, as Wette points out, the Soviet partisan movement became a serious factor only in 1943. During the initial phase of the German occupation, in 1941-42, when 100 Russian "partisans" were reported killed for every German casualty, Wehrmacht reports equated Jews with partisans, masking the fact that "the Jewish population represented the most significant group of victims in these operations" (pp. 127-128).

In a report to the OKW on the situation in the occupied Ukraine at the beginning of December 1941, Brigadier General Hans Leykauf estimated that 150,000 to 200,000 Jews had been executed. He acknowledged that this action represented the "elimination of superfluous mouths to feed," but pointed out that it also had economic disadvantages: "If we shoot the Jews, let the prisoners of war die, and condemn a considerable part of the urban population to starvation, and if we are further going to lose a part of the rural population to hunger next year, then the question that must be answered is: Who exactly is supposed to produce [anything of] value here?" (p. 126). Leykauf's reference to the fate of Russian POWs in German captivity touches on one of the most terrible atrocities of the Second World War, the Wehrmacht "allowing more than 3 million Soviet prisoners of war to starve to death" (p. 244). No less indelible a stain on the record of the Wehrmacht was the killing of some 46,000 Italian military internees and prisoners of war (p. 224).

Regarding Hitler's relationship with his generals and their acquiescence in and support of measures that were actively opposed by at least a few of their peers, Wette points out a bond between the supreme commander and his highest-ranking officers that became generally known only decades after the war: Hitler's very generous gifts. Grants of land or money to reward outstanding service had been traditional in Europe through the early twentieth century, but they were bestowed ceremoniously with publicity. Hitler's gifts, on the other hand, were made privately and discreetly on personal occasions, such as a birthday or a wedding.[9] Turning from the senior generals to the German armed forces as a whole, Wette notes that of some twenty million men (about half the male citizens of Germany) who served during the war, no more than two million were volunteers (p. 158). Although the overwhelming majority were

conscripts, most of them served loyally and many with strong conviction.

The initial point of departure for the postwar legend of the guiltless German Army was the final Wehrmacht Report of May 9, 1945, issued under the authority of the new Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, Grand Admiral Karl Dönitz, who had succeeded Hitler as German head of state. Little more than six months later, on the eve of the opening of the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg, two former field marshals and three former generals submitted a memorandum on "The German Army from 1920 to 1945" for consideration by the tribunal in the impending prosecution of the German "General Staff and High Command" as a criminal organization—at the suggestion of a prominent member of the U.S. staff for the Nuremberg trials, Major General William J. Donovan, wartime director of the recently dissolved Office of Strategic Services (OSS), who opposed prosecution of "German Army field commanders (who were 'just doing their duty')."[10] The memorandum argued that the army had been against the National Socialist party and the SS, disapproved of most of Hitler's important decisions and opposed war crimes. The defense of the generals on trial at Nuremberg was largely based on the image of the German armed forces reflected in the final Wehrmacht Report and in this memorandum. Former Wehrmacht officers tended to take its contents at face value. For many, the credibility of this stance was reinforced by the rejection, in the final verdict of the International Military Tribunal, of the indictment. Nonetheless the verdict assigned members of the high command responsibility for the suffering of millions. Consequently, the tribunal formally recommended bringing them to trial.

This recommendation was followed in subsequent trials conducted under American aegis at Nuremberg from December 1946 to April 1949, including Case 12, *United States of America vs. Wilhelm von Leeb, et al.*, "The High Command Case" (December 1947 to October 1948). Thirteen senior officers were indicted and, after the suicide of one, twelve were tried and ten convicted. Among the charges were the murders or deportations of Allied prisoners of war captured along the coasts of Greece and western Europe. Two defendants, Admiral Otto Schniewind and Field Marshal Hugo Sperrle, were acquitted altogether and the rest of them were acquitted of committing "crimes against peace," insofar as none had been involved, at a policy level, in conspiracy to commit aggression. One of them, von Leeb, sacked by Hitler for urging retrenchment to a stronger line on the north-

ern Russian front, was convicted only of “crimes against humanity” and sentenced to time served. The remaining ten, convicted of war crimes as well as crimes against humanity, received sentences ranging from five years to life.[11]

Three months before the verdicts in the High Command Case, the Berlin Blockade and Airlift had begun, setting the stage for a transformation of relations between the western Allies and their recent enemy. A symptom of and contributing factor to this transformation was a program initiated at the end of the war, when U.S. Army historians began interrogating senior German prisoners of war for operational and other information to be used in writing the official history of the conflict. Within a few years, many of Hitler’s former generals became civilian employees of the U.S. Army, under the overall supervision of the former Chief of Staff of the Army, General Franz Halder, in what became known as the German Military History Program.[12] Wette points out the irony of Wehrmacht officers reproducing their view of the war at the behest of the Allies. Under Halder, the authors of the military studies tended to distinguish the bitter but decent form of warfare waged by the army’s troops from the criminal operations of the SS and to attribute the German Army’s defeats to problems beyond the generals’ control, not least of all Hitler’s dilettantism and refusal to accept competent military advice. Thus, as Wette observes, Wehrmacht leadership defended themselves with a pre-emptive view of their roles based on source material restricted from the view of some scholars until the 1960s or later. In the 1950s and 1960s quite a few of the leading German officers who had participated in this project began to go public with their own memoirs and works on various aspects of the war. Many of them, Wette observes, tended to treat Hitler as a rank amateur who spoiled the work of the professionals, as suggested by the title chosen by Manstein for his book, *Lost Victories*. [13]

More important for the public image and the self-esteem of the Wehrmacht elite than its semi-acquittal at Nuremberg, according to Wette, were two public declarations made early in 1951. The first came on January 23 from the new NATO Supreme Commander, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, well known to have had harsh words for the Wehrmacht in the past. At a press conference in Frankfurt, he announced that he, for his part, did not believe that the German soldier as such had lost his honor, adding that he had come to the conviction that there was “a real difference ... between German soldiers and officers as such and Hitler and his crimi-

nal gang.” The second important declaration came on April 5, 1951, when Chancellor Konrad Adenauer made a statement formally vindicating blameless German soldiers who had served their country honorably in a speech to the Bundestag in connection with a revision of the constitution of the Federal Republic entitling former career soldiers of the Wehrmacht to government-funded retirement. Eisenhower’s statement and Adenauer’s pronouncement “may be regarded,” Wette writes, “as marking the end of the postwar period as a time of humiliation, impotence, and a lack of professional opportunities for the former Wehrmacht elite” (p. 237).

These developments did not occur in a vacuum; they reflected the West German political atmosphere at the time, as illustrated by an incident recounted by Wette.[14] In fall 1952 Wilhelm Kappe, a war criminal convicted by the British for murdering a Russian POW, escaped from prison to the home of relatives in Aurich in Lower Saxony. When Wilhelm Heidepeter, a merchant who was head of the Social Democrats in the city council, learned of this, he reported it to the police. Heidepeter was verbally and physically threatened, and then stripped of his party offices, with no objection raised in the German press. Although the British High Commissioner for Germany, Ivone Kirkpatrick, stated that Kappe had been convicted of murdering an Allied citizen, many Germans demanded the release of “so-called war criminals.” The U.S. High Commissioner for Germany, John J. McCloy, received death threats for refusing to pardon war criminals held on death row at Landsberg. In the course of the 1950s this mood did not change.

The Bundeswehr, established in 1955, was inevitably comprised of Wehrmacht veterans.[15] However, its founders saw to it that its institutional character was quite different from that of the traditionally conservative German Army infused with the authoritarian spirit of Prussian militarism. Under the leadership of reformers, particularly Wolf von Baudissin, the Federal Republic was to have an army of citizens in uniform with rights and privileges, even for soldiers in the lowest ranks, that would have been unthinkable in the Wehrmacht.[16] However, the background of the overwhelming majority of its personnel (and virtually all of its officers) led many to identify themselves with the German military tradition as they understood it. Many lacked interest or understanding of the democratic program of the reformers. In response, Christian Democrat Kai-Uwe von Hassel issued a “Traditions Decree” in 1965. It avoided dealing with most of the issues in the heated debate between reformers and traditionalists, but praised the members of

the resistance who had participated in the plot of July 20, 1944, in terms, Wette notes, "to which the majority of Wehrmacht veterans were by no means receptive" (p. 264).

In the context of the bitter armaments controversy at the beginning of the 1980s, increasingly serious public criticism of the Bundeswehr's understanding of its relationship to the Wehrmacht emerged, as reflected in the practice of occasionally naming barracks for generals who had been fervent National Socialists. Social Democratic defense minister Hans Apel took the important step of issuing on a second "Traditions Decree" in 1982 explicitly acknowledging that the armed forces had been misused in part through their own responsibility and that the Bundeswehr could not draw its military tradition from such an unjust regime. Christian Democrat Manfred Wörner, who succeeded Apel after the fall of Helmut Schmidt's government less than two weeks later, declared in his inaugural speech that he would dump the new decree as soon as possible, as he was stridently urged to do by traditionalists in the Bundeswehr, veterans' organizations and the right-wing press. As it turned out, however, he did no such thing—in all likelihood, Wette writes, because a growing number of scholarly publications had prevented him from making the opposite case. Traditionalists in the Bundeswehr had to observe the new guidelines, but veterans' organizations "challenged the politically unwelcome findings of academic military historians and were not above attacking their reputations, even demanding the dismissal of Manfred Messerschmidt, then the chief historian at the [Defense Ministry's] Military History Research Institute" (p. 266).

Further studies in the 1980s and early 1990s rendered the image of an innocent Wehrmacht altogether untenable, so in a speech to Bundeswehr commanders in November 1995 another conservative minister of defense, Christian Democrat Volker Rühe, reaffirmed the 1982 decree unequivocally, explicitly disavowing the Wehrmacht as a source of tradition for the Bundeswehr. Several months earlier, the Institute for Social Research opened the Wehrmacht exhibit. Viewed by hundreds of thousands in thirty-three German and Austrian cities, its graphic depictions of Wehrmacht involvement in atrocities, together with the publicity it triggered, contributed to a breakthrough in German public consciousness.[17] Toward the end of the book, Wette recounts the renaming in Rendsburg of the Bundeswehr barracks previously named for a Wehrmacht general. In 2000, Fritz Stern gave an address at the ceremony, honoring a soldier, Anton Schmid, whose heroic decency in rescuing Lithua-

nian Jews led to his execution.[18]. In 1994 (two years after the initial publication of Wette's study), the barracks at the general staff college of the Bundeswehr in Hamburg were renamed in honor of von Baudissin, the principal advocate of reform in the postwar German armed forces.[19] In his conclusion, Wette notes "a major process of reorientation" as the generations that conducted and experienced the war have passed away, allowing the dispersion of the myth of the Wehrmacht (p. 296). Measured by the values of contemporary civil society rather than those of Germany's earlier martial culture, Wette concludes, "only the resistant minorities in the Wehrmacht who in one way or another refused to be a part of the war of annihilation may hope to command respect." [20]

Wette closes with the affirmation that "the legend of the Wehrmacht's 'clean hands' now belongs to the past" (p. 297). For most Germans today, especially those of the younger generation, this may well be true, but many older Germans and non-Germans continue to hold the Wehrmacht in considerable esteem. Some of those who do may criticize Wette's study for what they see as a blanket condemnation of an army in which millions served without cause for reproach, accusing him of tarring all German soldiers with the same brush. But that misses the point entirely. The book is not, as suggested by the ill-chosen English subtitle, about the Wehrmacht's history, myth and reality in general, but rather, as indicated by the subtitle of the original German edition, specifically about its ideological perception of the enemy, its participation in a war of annihilation and its postwar legend of innocence. In this concise monograph, one of Germany's most distinguished military historians provides a carefully argued and extensively documented study of the Wehrmacht as an institution: its cultural roots and ideology; its role, in Hitler's words, as one of the pillars of the Third Reich; its dedicated participation in Hitler's war of annihilation; the establishment and cultivation of the postwar legend of its innocence; and, finally, the belated acknowledgment throughout Germany of its criminal past, as formally demonstrated by the official disavowal of its traditions by the Bundeswehr.

As a contribution to the literature on German history, Wette's work can be said to complement and provide a kind of sequel to the late Gordon A. Craig's magisterial study, *The Politics of the Prussian Army 1640-1945* (1955), because the last third of his book, extending to the beginning of the twenty-first century, is devoted to the post-1945 cultivation of a positive image of the Wehrmacht, followed by its erosion during the past three decades. In his preface to the English edition, Peter Fritzsche explains

the importance of Wette's contribution to a clear understanding of the Wehrmacht's criminal role in the war. The foreword by Manfred Messerschmidt, former chief civilian historian of the Military History Research Institute, translated from the original edition, concludes with the observation that "Wette's book ... represents a necessary step in the early stages of reconceiving the past ... [and] demonstrates how the findings of earlier critical studies can be incorporated into a new overall picture" (pp. xvi-xvii).

Although this work is a landmark in German military historiography, the English edition can unfortunately be recommended only with a serious caveat. Though readable, it lacks the felicity and precision of Wette's masterfully crafted monograph, often failing to convey if not distorting significant nuances in his treatment of complex issues. Moreover, because of mistakes and omissions throughout the volume, several of which are noted below, meticulous scholars citing the work may wish to refer to the German edition or, at the very least, check any passage cited in the English translation to verify its fidelity to the original.[21]

Notes

[1]. Militärhistorisches Forschungsamt, *Das Deutsche Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg*, vols. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5/1, 5/2, 6, 7, 9/1, and 9/2 (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1979-2005). Seven volumes have been published in English translation: *Germany and the Second World War*, ed. Military History Research Institute (Oxford: Clarendon Press): vol. 1, *The Build-Up of German Aggression* (1990); vol. 2, *Germany's Initial Conquests in Europe* (1991); vol. 3, *The Mediterranean, South-East Europe, and North Africa 1939-1941* (1995); vol. 4, *The Attack on the Soviet Union* (1998); vol. 5, *Wartime Administration, Economy, and Manpower Resources, Part I, 1939-1941* (2000), Part 2, *1942-1944/5* (2003); vol. 6, *The Global War: Widening of the Conflict into a World War and the Shift of the Initiative 1941-1943* (2001); and vol. 7, *The Strategic Air War in Europe and the War in the West and East Asia, 1943-1944/5* (2006). The translation of "Militärhistorisches Forschungsamt" as "Military History Research Institute"—despite "Forschungsamt" literally meaning "Research Office"—is reminiscent of the usage adopted in the postwar Anglo-American translation of *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series C (1933-1937) and Series D (1937-1941), in which "Auswärtiges Amt" (literally, "Foreign Office") was rendered in English as "Foreign Ministry" because, as explained to me by the last American editor-in-chief of the series, the late

Howard M. Smyth, the British insisted that there was really only one Foreign Office in the world—the one in London.

[2]. Horst Boog, Jürgen Fehrer, Joachim Hoffmann, Ernst Klink, Rolf-Dieter Mueller, and Gerd R. Ueberschär, *Der Angriff auf die Sowjetunion* (Frankfurt: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1991).

[3]. Wolfram Wette, *Die Wehrmacht. Feindbilder, Vernichtungskrieg, Legenden* (Frankfurt: S. Fischer Verlag, 2002), the edition cited here. In 2005 a paperback edition was published in Frankfurt by the Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag.

[4]. Wette's treatment of this theme can be read as a kind of sequel to his monograph on the cultural and ideological background of World War II, published in translation under the title "Ideology, Propaganda, and Internal Politics as Preconditions of the War Policy of the Third Reich," as part 1 of *Germany and the Second World War*, vol. 1, pp. 9-155; the German original is available in the updated, unabridged paperback reprint of the opening volume of the Military History Research Institute series: Wilhelm Deist, Manfred Messerschmidt, Hans-Erich Volkmann and Wolfram Wette, *Ursachen und Voraussetzungen des Zweiten Weltkrieges* (Frankfurt: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1989), pp. 23-208. At Freiburg since 1998, Professor Wette was affiliated with the Military History Research Institute from 1971 to 1995.

[5]. These were General Johannes Blaskowitz, commander of the Eighth Army in south Poland, and General Georg von Küchler, commander of the Third Army that invaded Poland from East Prussia. The vigor with which Blaskowitz pursued his allegations earned him the enmity of Heinrich Himmler and accounts for his not having been promoted to field marshal, despite his seniority and ability, whereas Küchler was advanced to that rank in June 1942 (Mark M. Boatner III, *Biographical Dictionary of World War II* [Novato: Presidio Press, 1996], pp. 45-46 for Blaskowitz and pp. 295-296 for Küchler).

[6]. Whereas Wette writes in the German edition (on p. 97) that this further study was undertaken "in den 70er und 80er Jahren im Militärhistorischen Forschungsamt Freiburg i. Br." (i.e., "in the 70s and 80s at the Military History Research Institute in Freiburg im Breisgau"), the English edition states (on p. 92) that it was done "in the Military History Research Institute (Potsdam)." Because the reference to the 1970s and 1980s is deleted and Potsdam has been substituted for Freiburg, the English edition implies that the further study in ques-

tion could not have been undertaken before the 1990s (insofar as the institute was moved from Freiburg to Potsdam only after German unification). A more serious flaw in the translation is the deletion of Wette's reference to the finding regarding this incident published in *Germany and the Second World War*, vol. 4, *The Attack on the Soviet Union* (cited above in note 1). Note 7 on p. 316 of the English edition of Wette's book omits his summary (in note 8 on p. 308 of the German edition) of the passage (on p. 498 of vol. 4) where Jürgen Föhrster wrote that "it was probably at a joint breakfast of the Army High Command with the senior commanders that the first protests were voiced against Hitler's ideologically motivated conduct of the war. But that protest was primarily directed against the exclusion of the courts martial, which the commanders feared might lead to a slackening of discipline and good order. It is exceedingly doubtful whether the army and field commanders seriously considered compelling Hitler to relinquish his demands by threatening collective resignation. After all, there was agreement on the view that political commissars in the Red Army did not have combatant status." In other words, like terrorists in the early twenty-first century, they were regarded as not being entitled to formal proceedings in a military court-martial, and no supreme court in the Third Reich had the standing to rule otherwise.

[7]. My translation from pp. 115-116 of the German edition (cited in note 3 above) because the English edition mistranslates the phrase, "während ihres Eroberungs- und Vernichtungskrieges gegen die Sowjetunion" to read "during its campaign against the Soviet Union" (p. 112).

[8]. The English edition incorrectly translates Eberhard's rank of "Generalmajor" as "major general" rather than "brigadier general," the corresponding rank in the American and British armies. Throughout the book, the rank of general officers is mistranslated. The succession of ranks of flag officers in the German Army (compared to the U.S. Army) was "Generalmajor" (U.S. brigadier general), "Generalleutnant" (U.S. major general), "General der Infanterie," "General der Artillerie," and so on (U.S. lieutenant general), "Generaloberst" (U.S. general) and "Generalfeldmarschall" (U.S. general of the army). The ranks of generals in the Bundeswehr have cognate designations to corresponding American ranks.

[9]. This is explained in Thomas Scheben, "Review of Gerd R. Ueberschär and Winfried Vogel, *Dienen und Verdienen - Hitlers Geschenke und seine Eliten*," H-Net War, H-Net Reviews, January, 2000, at <http://www.h-net.msu.edu/reviews/showrev.cgi?path=12723949617727>.

(Published by S. Fischer Verlag in Frankfurt in 1999, the book was reprinted in 2006 as a paperback by Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag.) Scheben also mentions that the family of Field Marshal von Leeb still owns Bavarian forestland worth over a million dollars that Hitler gave him during the war. In *Hitler and His Generals: The Hidden Crisis, January-June 1938* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1974), Harold C. Deutsch documented that Hitler personally gave General Walther von Brauchitsch 80,000 RM to induce his wife to agree to a secret divorce (preventing a public scandal that would have precluded him from succeeding Werner von Fritsch as Commanding General of the German Army). But the earliest published report on Hitler's practice of giving lavish gifts to others of which I am aware was a German magazine article in 1980 by Peter Meroth, "Vorschuß auf den Endsieg," *Stern* 25 (June 12, 1980), pp. 86-92. In 1992, Gerhard L. Weinberg speculated on how average soldiers during the last weeks of the war might have felt had they been aware of the "gifts" routinely given to members of the high command, suggesting the role of bribery as a fertile field of study for understanding German army cohesion despite its material disintegration in the last weeks of the war, in addition to fear of the military justice system ("Some Thoughts on World War II," *Journal of Military History* 56 (1992): pp. 659-668).

[10]. Telford Taylor, *The Anatomy of the Nuremberg Trials: A Personal Memoir* (New York: Knopf, 1992; paperback repr., Boston: Little, Brown Back Bay Books, 1993), p. 148. The OSS was dissolved by Harry Truman's executive order of September 20, 1945 (*ibid.*, p. 239). Donovan saw the Cold War coming, regarded the Germans as potentially valuable allies, and vigorously sought to have all but the very top military leaders exonerated. As recounted by Taylor on pp. 145-149, 180-186, and 236-240, the categorical rejection of Donovan's approach by the chief U.S. prosecutor, Supreme Court Justice Robert H. Jackson, led to his abrupt departure from Nuremberg within two weeks of the submission of the memorandum on the German Army, which had been signed by Brauchitsch (Commander-in-Chief of the Army, 1938-41), Manstein (an army group commander on the Russian front, 1942-44), General Franz Halder (Army Chief of Staff, 1938-42), Lieutenant General Walter Warlimont (Deputy Chief of Operations of the High Command of the Wehrmacht throughout the war), and Lieutenant General Siegfried Westphal (Chief of Staff of the High Command on the western front, 1944-45). As he recounts in

his memoir, Taylor played a central role in the preparation and presentation of the General Staff and High Command case at the International Military Tribunal. He subsequently served as chief prosecutor in the follow-on trials conducted by the U.S. Army in Nuremberg from December 1946 to April 1949, including the High Command Case (1947-48). His personal memoir does not deal with the later trials, which he treated concisely in *Nuremberg Trials: War Crimes and International Law* (New York: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1949).

[11]. Like the two field marshals, Albert Kesselring and Manstein, whom the British tried and convicted in the late 1940s, they were released in the 1950s. The Manstein case had been particularly controversial in Britain, where, Wette writes, "former Prime Minister Winston Churchill went so far as to contribute to a fund so that Manstein would be able to pay two British defense attorneys" (p. 225).

[12]. On the program and the more than 2,500 studies it produced, see James A. Wood, "Captive Historians, Captivated Audience: The German Military History Program, 1945-1961," *Journal of Military History* 69 (2005): pp. 123-147. For a 24-volume selection of archival facsimiles of the English translations of 213 of the studies, see *World War II German Military Studies*, ed. Donald S. Detwiler; Charles B. Burdick and Jürgen Rohwer, associate editors (New York: Garland, 1979). Charles B. Burdick of San Jose State University was attached, as a young U.S. Army reserve officer, to the Historical Division's German group coordinated by Halder.

[13]. Erich von Manstein, *Lost Victories*, ed. and trans. Anthony G. Powell (London: Methuen, and Chicago: Regnery, 1958; Novato: Presidio Press, 1994). Among other such works available in English cited by Wette are Franz Halder, *Hitler as Warlord*, trans. Paul Findlay (New York: Putnam, 1950); Karl Dönitz, *Memoirs: Ten Years and Twenty Days*, trans. R. H. Stevens with David Woodward (Cleveland: World Publishing Co., and London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1959; Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1990); Heinz Guderian, *Panzer Leader*, trans. Constantine FitzGibbon (New York: Dutton, 1952; New York: DaCapo Press, 1996); Albert Kesselring, *A Soldier's Record*, trans. Lynton Hudson (New York: Morrow, 1954); and Siegfried Westphal, *The German Army in the West* (London: Cassell, 1952). Dönitz was responsible for the Final Report of the Wehrmacht of May 9, 1945, and Manstein, Halder, and Westphal were three of the five signers of the generals' memorandum of November 19, 1945.

[14]. The episode was initially described in an article entitled "Das ganz normale Grauen [Everyday Horror]" in the newsweekly *Der Spiegel* 16 (April 14, 1997), pp. 64-67, by Norbert Frei, author of *Adenauer's Germany and the Nazi Past: The Politics of Amnesty and Integration*, trans. Joel Golb (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

[15]. In 1958 over 12,000 officers in the Bundeswehr had served in the Wehrmacht. All officers from the rank of colonel upward were screened by a board of review comprised of thirty-eight public figures named by the president of the Federal Republic on the nomination of the federal government and approved by the Bundestag. To criticism that all the higher officers in the Bundeswehr had been in the Wehrmacht, Adenauer is said to have responded that NATO did not want any eighteen-year-old generals from him ("Geschichte der Bundeswehr" (last revised January 5, 2007), *Wikipedia, die freie Enzyklopädie*, at <http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bundeswehr>. Adenauer's comment about NATO was an allusion to the fact that the Bundeswehr was not an independent force under German command, but integrated into NATO under an American supreme commander. On the establishment of the Bundeswehr, see Donald Abenheim, *Reforging the Iron Cross: The Search for Tradition in the West German Armed Forces* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

[16]. Not only may Bundeswehr soldiers file complaints under guaranteed "whistle-blower" protection, but they also have the right to appeal directly to a special office of the Bundestag (whether or not they have chosen to seek redress through official military channels).

[17]. For a concise account of the Wehrmacht Exhibition and its public impact, together with consideration of the criticism of flaws in it and references to the relevant literature as well as links to related websites, see, in addition to the discussion in Wette's book, "Verbrechen der Wehrmacht" (last revised November 6, 2006), *Wikipedia, die freie Enzyklopädie*, at <http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wehrmachtsausstellung>.

[18]. In her report on the trial of Adolf Eichmann, Hannah Arendt (quoted on pp. 279-280 by Wette) wrote of the impact of the testimony of a Jew telling what Schmid had done for him: "During the few minutes it took Kovner to tell of the help that had come from a German sergeant, a hush settled over the courtroom; it was as though the crowd had spontaneously decided to observe the usual two minutes of silence in honor of

the man named Anton Schmidt [sic]. And in those two minutes, which were like a sudden burst of light in the midst of impenetrable, unfathomable darkness, a single thought stood out clearly, irrefutably, beyond question—how utterly different everything would be today in this courtroom, in Israel, in Germany, in all of Europe, and perhaps in all countries of the world, if only more such stories could have been told” (Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, rev. and enl. ed. [New York: Viking, 1964], p. 231). Ten years after the initial appearance of the volume under review, Wette saw to it that more such stories were indeed told in *Retter in Uniform. Handlungsspielräume im Vernichtungskrieg der Wehrmacht*, ed. Wolfram Wette (Frankfurt: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 2002).

[19]. *Die Geschichte der Generalleutnant-Graf-von-Baudissin-Kaserne (GBK)* (Stand vom 06.03.2006), at http://www.fueakbw.de/index.php?ShowParent=430&show_lang=de.

[20]. Translated by the reviewer from Wette, *Die Wehrmacht* (pp. 288-289), because of the mistranslation in the English edition, where, on p. 296, one reads that “only those few resistance fighters in the Wehrmacht who protested against extermination in one way or another deserve our respect,” a rendering that suggests that the translator was oblivious to the fact that open protest against extermination by a resistance fighter would have been suicidal in the Third Reich. Wette did not write of “those few resistance fighters” who “protested,” but of “die widerstndigen Minderheiten der Wehrmacht, die sich dem Vernichtungskrieg auf diese oder jene Weise verweigert haben.” In addition, near the top of p. 297 of the English edition one reads that the officers involved in the conspiracy against Hitler were “anti-democratic,” but the German original states (on p. 289) that they were “keine Demokraten,” that is, “no democrats,” a significant distinction, particularly in the context of Wette’s carefully nuanced conclusion.

[21]. Wette’s original work successfully filled the need for an authoritative, even-handed, impeccably scholarly treatment of its very controversial subject, but the English version is so badly flawed that it can be recommended only with reservations. Lest the errors in the translation mentioned so far leave the impression that the Harvard University Press edition, despite occasional lapses, can be depended upon to be generally faithful to the German original, here are five further examples of the kinds of mistakes that make necessary the caveat with which this review unfortunately has to be concluded: on

p. 38, lines 4 and 5, General Erich Ludendorff’s political advisor, Colonel Max Bauer, is called “a spokesman for the extreme right-wing Pan-German Party,” rather than “a spokesman in the supreme army command for the extreme right-wing Pan-German Party.” The failure to translate and include in the sentence the prepositional phrase “in the supreme army command” (i.e., “in der OHL,” on p. 47 of the original edition) indicates that Bauer served as a spokesman for a political party, presumably in the kind of public role that partisan spokesmen have. Such a role would have been out of the question for him as a general-staff officer. On p. 84 one reads: “In 1935 Fritsch became commander in chief of the Wehrmacht,” whereas Wette wrote of his having been made “commander in chief of the army” (i.e., “Oberbefehlshaber des Heeres,” on p. 89 of the original edition), not of the armed forces (the Wehrmacht, which included the navy and air force in addition to the army, of which Werner von Blomberg at the time was commander in chief). On p. 117, in a description of the mass shootings at Babi Yar, “drei Gruppen von Schtzen, mit insgesamt etwa 12 Schtzen” (on p. 121 of the original edition) is translated “three groups of soldiers, with about twelve men in each.” A few lines later, the sentence, “Die Schtzen standen jeweils hinter den Juden und haben diese mit Genickschssen gettet,” is translated “The soldiers stood behind them and killed them with shots to the base of the skull.” To begin with, there were about twelve riflemen altogether in the three groups, not twelve in each. But far more important is the mistranslation of “Schtzen.” This German word means “riflemen,” not “soldiers,” the German word for which is “Soldaten.” The mistranslation of “Schtzen” as “soldiers” tells the reader that the killers were German Army soldiers, whereas in fact they were members of the SS. That the killing was to be done by SS members rather than army personnel was spelled out two pages earlier, on p. 115, where it is stated that the Wehrmacht city commandant, Brigadier General Eberhard, told the representative of the SS, “You have to do the shooting” (with the “you” in italics). On p. 142, in the passage where Wette writes (on p. 143 in the original edition) of Field Marshal Helmuth von Moltke having successfully led the wars of unification, the translator has inserted a phrase (not in the German original), apparently with the intention of helpfully informing the reader that this was done under Germany’s “first Kaiser, the former King Wilhelm I of Prussia.” However, Wilhelm I was by no means the “former” King of Prussia. When he reluctantly assumed the title of German Kaiser, he proudly remained King of Prussia, as did his heirs. On p. 297, the translation states that “most Ger-

man citizens now feel respect for soldiers who deserted from the Wehrmacht, and those 'defeatists' and 'underminers of morale' who refused at some point to follow their leaders during the war," whereas Wette wrote not of "defeatists" ("Defätisten"), but of "conscientious objectors" ("Wehrdienstverweigerer," on p. 289 of the original edition), who were criminalized during the Third Reich.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at:

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