

other things, by basic disregard of law and norms; by the personality principle, which replaced institutional responsibility with the arbitrariness of personal cliques; by the *Führerprinzip*, which vitiated open, informed debate; and, by a darwinistic system of competition. And yet, this polycratic system, with its highly centrifugal nature, was prevented from self-destruction by the monocacy of Hitler's personal authority, which provided the glue that held the system together.

As he focuses on Hitler and his decision-making, Rebutisch reveals a dictator who, even in the areas of administration peripheral to his own interests, made the fundamental decisions and established the basic direction of policy — though often in ill-considered and arbitrary ways. He was, Rebutische concludes, more than any other national leader, the “*alleinentscheidende Instanz*.” He carried out monocratic rule by polycratic means because these means offered him the best way to ensure that he had at all levels the administrative machinery, the ideological dedication and the lack of bureaucratic inertia necessary to effect a revolutionary reordering of Europe. The Führerstaat evolved so relentlessly that by the time war broke out, the “deformation of the state bureaucracy” was so far advanced that only in a few cases could officials operate in time-honored ways with traditional ethos. The vast majority of ministries and lower levels of bureaucracy had been infiltrated and overwhelmed by party people. In the end, Rebutisch seems to achieve a synthesis of sorts between the Hitler-centric and the functionalist approaches to the Nazi regime.

RONALD SMELSER, *University of Utah*

Alfred M. de Zayas. *The Wehrmacht War Crimes Bureau, 1939-1945*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1989. Pp. xix, 364. Paper \$15.95.

The book under review is the abridged English translation of the author's *Die Wehrmacht-Untersuchungsstelle* (Universitas/Langen Müller, 1979). The German version proved so successful that it went through four editions and provided the basis for a two-part documentary on West German television in 1983. De Zayas is uniquely qualified to write on the subject of war crimes. He received a law degree from Harvard University and a Ph.D. from the University of Göttingen.

Unfortunately, the book does not reflect the credentials of its author. De Zayas discusses the activities of the War Crimes Bureau, an office established in September 1939 within the Wehrmacht High Command to investigate and document war crimes committed by the Allies against German soldiers and ethnic German civilians. The bureau received the vast majority of its information from sworn depositions given by witnesses to military judges

and bureau personnel. De Zayas emphasizes that the office staff consisted of experienced professionals who had not joined the Nazi party and whose efforts were directed at arriving at the truth during their investigations. Some of the material collected was abused for propaganda purposes by the Hitler government, but for the most part, de Zayas concludes, the bureau staff credibly documented Allied violations of the rules and laws of war. Hence, the German armed forces were not the only ones committing serious war crimes during World War II.

De Zayas cautions that his work is not intended to relativize or excuse heinous Nazi crimes that as the Holocaust, the massive use of slave labor, the occupation policy for the East, and the mistreatment of Allied soldiers. Rather, he points out, its purpose is to underscore that the laws and rules governing warfare are meant to protect all soldiers and that war itself is evil.

While few would disagree with this conclusion, the book as a whole does have serious problems. For one, the War Crimes Bureau was clearly a minor agency in the Wehrmacht High Command and its authority was rather limited. It was only one of several offices investigating Allied war crimes, and given its restricted function, perhaps a scholarly article, instead of a book, on the bureau's history would have sufficed. Moreover, the bureau did play a negative role by providing material to other government agencies for anti-Allied propaganda, and this it was not as harmless as portrayed by de Zayas. Most important, however, its work in no way changes the manner in which Germany itself was conducting the war, thus leaving the impression that the motives behind the bureau's founding were insincere.

The author's writing is another major problem. De Zayas uses far too many quotations from depositions, memoranda and other documents. In fact, at times it appears that de Zayas views his own role as a historian as simply gluing together quotes with a few lines of his own text. Slightly less annoying is the excessive detail he provides. Many of the names in the book (e.g., writers and recipients of memoranda, witnesses, judges, etc.) mean nothing to the reader. Finally, the author makes no attempt to integrate his work with the existing historiography on World War II, Nazi Germany or war crimes in general.

FRANK M. BUSCHER, *Christian Brothers University*