

H-Net Reviews

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Theodore S. Hamerow. *On the Road to the Wolf's Lair: German Resistance to Hitler*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997. x + 442 pp. \$29.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-674-63680-4.

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Theodore S. Hamerow is an established scholar who has done very good work in the field of nineteenth-century Germany history. He now has ventured into the twentieth century with a study of the German Resistance against Hitler. This is a book with a distinct thesis that presents a challenge to the reader: the men who had sought to overthrow the Nazi regime regarded the Weimar Republic with the same "common hostility" that they displayed towards the Third Reich; they were preponderately antidemocrats, nationalists, and anti-semites who resisted for reasons of expediency, largely in view of impending defeat. This thesis, clearly derived from the British historian John W. Wheeler-Bennett, in itself a perfectly arguable one, is in this case hammered in with support of carefully selected but spotty and inadequate documentation.

There are real problems connected with the selectivity of sources and of the resisters with whom the author deals:

(1) Some crucial archives have not been consulted, namely the National Archives in Washington D.C. (State Department and OSS papers) from which only two documents were drawn; the FDR Library in Hyde Park, N.Y.; the FBI papers on Adam von Trott zu Solz; the J.F. and A.W. Dulles papers in Princeton, N.J.; the Helmuth James von Moltke papers in the hands of his widow Freya; the Churchill College Archive in Cambridge, England, especially the Vansittart and Christie papers; the Public Record Office, London, other than the one Goerdeler document 371/21695/C15084 (!!); the Trott papers at Balliol College, Oxford; the Lionel Curtis papers at St. Anthony's College, Oxford; the Dietrich Bonhoeffer papers now in the Staatsbibliothek, Berlin; the Trott, Gerhard Ritter and Hans Rothfels papers in the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz; the papers of the World Council of Churches in Geneva, etc., etc.

(2) Some crucial literature is missing, including *Foreign Relations of the United States*, the many contributions to the field by Hans Mommsen and Peter Steinbach;

Michael Balfour's works on Moltke; the books by Harold C. Deutsch; my own book on the foreign relations of the Resistance; Henry O. Malone's and Christopher Sykes's biographies of Trott; Lothar Kettenacker's *Das 'Andere Deutschland'*; Willem A. Visser't Hooft's memoirs. Also very important would have been the papers from the International Conference on the German Resistance held in Berlin in July 1984, edited by Juergen Schmaedeke and Peter Steinbach.

This book certainly is not one by a dryasdust. Almost all scholarly books of interest are of course started off by a more or less challenging hypothesis. The problem in this case, however, is the right disproportion between hypothesis and evidence. As in Daniel Jonah Goldhagen's book (*Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*, New York, 1996) there is a striking disproportion between hypothesis and evidence, with both becoming hostage to bias.

(3) A word about the nature of resistance is in order. The German *Widerstand* was indeed small; it did not add up to a "movement." It no doubt had its shortcomings—the "weakness" of the beginning, the lack of organization, the initial sympathy of many of its members, but by no means all, with National Socialism, and so on. Many of its members were anything but perfect, humanly and politically. But the assumption that any resistance movement should be flawless is altogether wrongheaded; the French resistance and Norwegian resistance were not flawless either. The participants each acted in extraordinary situations in extraordinary ways. Anyway, institutions do not resist. The burden fell mostly, and particularly in the German case, on individuals who were all human—all too human—for better and for worse.

The author of this book sets himself up as a judge. As a matter of fact, he focuses on a small number of men who seem to him particularly vulnerable and offensive: Carl Goerdeler, Ulrich von Hasell, Johannes Popitz, Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, General Ludwig Beck, Bishops Otto Dibelius, Theophil Wurm, Cardinals Faulhaber and Galen

and a few others. Goerdeler as an inveterate enemy of Weimar? Julius Leber as an anti-Semite? Helmuth von Moltke as the Hamlet of the *Widerstand*? This kind of (mis)information is apt to harden a prejudiced reader in his bias, but it does not make good history. *Zeitgeschichte* in any case is a hazardous business. The more it lends it-

self to value judgements, and it does, the more discipline it requires.

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