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Franz Neumann, Herbert Marcuse, and Otto Kirchheimer, *Secret Reports on Nazi Germany: The Frankfurt School Contribution to the War Effort*. Ed. Raffaele Laudani. Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2013. Pp. xxiv, 679. ISBN 978-0-691-13413-0.

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After Germany declared war against the United States in 1941, American forces needed an accurate understanding of the origins, policies, and functioning of the National Socialist state. As the war went on, they also needed a viable plan to reconstruct postwar Germany in such a way that it could no longer threaten world peace. To this end, the US government created a special division within its intelligence agency, the OSS:¹ namely, the Research and Analysis (R&A) Branch, which became the nation's largest and most influential research institution. The intellectual luminaries who worked there constituted the "theoretical brain trust" of the American war machine.... [A]lthough not engaged in determining war strategy or tactics, [it] would be able to assemble, organize, analyze and filter the immense flow of military information toward Washington, thanks to the unique capacity of the specialists on hand to interpret the relevant sources" (2).

The stars of the R&A's Central European Section—Otto Kirchheimer, Herbert Marcuse, and Franz Neumann—were recent German-Jewish émigrés, "as united in their concerted attempts to understand National Socialism as clearly and fully as possible as they were in their abhorrence of it" (x). As exponents of the Frankfurt School of social theory, they sought explanations for the turbulent upheavals in the capitalist societies of the twentieth century. *Secret Reports on Nazi Germany* presents a selection from the thousands of pages of intelligence reports that these refugee-analysts produced for the OSS during and immediately after the war. They were originally circulated anonymously and declassified in the 1970s; their authors could be identified only by combing through military records division documents at the National Archives. Editor Raffaele Laudani (Univ. of Bologna) has chosen "only texts for which it was possible to identify with reasonable certainty at least one of the three authors responsible for its drafting" (xviii).

Laudani begins with brief biographical sketches of Neumann, Marcuse, and Kirchheimer. The three had much in common; besides their similar ethnic backgrounds, they were "united by a shared methodology and theoretical perspective" (8). The book highlights their intimate knowledge of the workings of the Nazi party and government and their place in the context of German history. They saw National Socialism as neither an aberration in German history nor the culmination of Germany's "Special Path" (*Sonderweg*), nor a new form of Prussian militarism (Winston Churchill's view). True to their Marxist leanings, the three men instead blamed the capitalist sector of society. Marcuse, for example, traced Germany's militarism and political aggression to "the policies of the German 'industrial bourgeoisie,'" particularly the captains of industry who had supported the Nazi movement in its early days, while remaining "camouflaged" by eschewing high political office. In the end, Nazi Germany was "one specific kind of highly 'modern' mass society" (xi)—a radicalized response to the economic instability of the 1920s and 1930s.

While the three were no doubt grateful to have escaped Nazi persecution, they were troubled by "ethnic prejudices" in the OSS against European émigrés. This bias was evident in the decision to assign supervisory duties to American WASPs, thus preventing the alien 'enemies' from assuming administrative responsibility in subdivisions like the Central European Section—even when, as in Neumann's case, their superior abilities were universally acknowledged" (7). They were also irked by the overly strict R&A internal directives regulating the drafting of reports down to the minutest detail. Many reports by the Central European Section were even blocked "because they were considered beneath R&A's expected standards of 'mature and objective research' [But] the three German scholars managed to reconcile their intellectual

1. Office of Strategic Services.

agenda with the ‘productivist’ exigencies of the American intellectual military establishment” (8). Once they found a way to work with the bureaucratic apparatus, the Central European Section was frequently consulted regarding Germany’s military situation after 1943 and asked to “comment on possible patterns of German collapse” (9).

The Frankfurt group did invaluable work in composing the *Handbook on Nazi Germany* and the *Civil Affairs Guides*, an important series of reports on the political, economic, legal, and administrative problems that the military government would face in occupied Germany. They also provided guidance for the democratic reconstitution of the country (12). As good Marxist thinkers, they recommended such socialist measures as the nationalization of key industries. They agreed, too, that the political and economic destruction of Germany envisioned by the Morgenthau Plan would be counterproductive. The daunting task of reconstituting Germany could be accomplished only in cooperation on some level with the German people (after a rigorous program of de-Nazification). The Central European Section recommended that the military government work with the leftist anti-Nazi opposition to make this possible (15).

Although some of these recommendations were adopted, the Frankfurt group members were disappointed when US authorities established strong ties not with left-wing elements in postwar Germany but with the Christian Democratic center. In the end, after a promising start, de-Nazification ultimately “renewed control of German public social economic and cultural life by forces which only temporarily ... had been deprived of the influence they had asserted under the Nazi regime” (17).

The Frankfurt School members had more success in proposing guidelines for the prosecution of war criminals. Correctly anticipating that many of the accused would claim to have been simply following orders, Neumann, in his report on the matter, established the idea that voluntary membership in the Nazi party and organizations, combined with the commission of war crimes, constituted a criterion for assigning guilt.

The most controversial part of the reports was Neumann’s assessment of the destruction of the Jews, which he saw not as the ultimate goal of Nazi policy, but as the “spearhead of the universal Nazi terror Not only Jews fall under the executioner’s ax, but countless others of many races, nationalities, beliefs, and religions.... Jews were guinea pigs in testing a method of repression”; on this view, the Final Solution was “a preparatory phenomenon” (19). Though many of Neumann’s colleagues in the Central European Section disagreed with this interpretation, nonetheless, it was echoed at the Nuremberg trials by the chief prosecutor for the United States, Justice Robert H. Jackson, who stated that “The ghetto was the laboratory for testing repressive measures” (20). Neumann, Kirchheimer, and Marcuse understood all too well the impact of Nazi anti-Semitism. They had all lost relatives in the Holocaust and they worked hard to assemble the documentation that “kept the fate of Europe’s Jews from disappearing entirely from the American military and diplomatic agenda” (21).

In his foreword to the book, Raymond Geuss writes that “the analyses this group presented seem to have had some effect on actual policy, although not as much as most of the members of the group would have wished” (ix). Since the book has no conclusion, the reader is left wondering precisely what the effects on actual policies were; even a brief précis of some specific effects of the group’s assessments would have been most useful.

This minor criticism aside, *Secret Reports on Nazi Germany* is a well produced² book that demonstrates that US authorities did excellent work in gathering accurate information about the enemy, but then acted only halfheartedly on the superb advice they received. The reports gathered here will be an indispensable resource for scholars of American intelligence in the World War II era.

2. I found only a few proofreading slips, including “Koln” (for “Köln”) on xxiv and “Weimer” (for “Weimar”) on xxxi. Also, the block quotation on p. 8 does not follow from the preceding paragraph.