

Die Aussenpolitik des Dritten 1933-1939. By Rainier F. Schmidt. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta. 2002. Pp. 448. Eur 25.00. ISBN 3-608-94047-2.

There have been many studies of the foreign policies of Germany and other powers in the years leading up to the beginning of World War II in 1939 as well as examinations of specific crises in the 1930s and the roles of key individuals in those crises. In this book Rainer F. Schmidt of the University of Würzburg attempts a general survey. Rather than follow a primarily chronological route from Adolf Hitler's becoming chancellor to his initiation of war in 1939, Schmidt begins with a thematic approach that examines Germany's situation in the world in 1933, reviews the impact of World War I and the peace treaties, details the various approaches to foreign policy within the new German leadership, and characterizes key National Socialist leaders before covering the actual course of events in sequence. The book is based on a very selective and incomplete survey of the literature and minimal reference to hitherto unpublished evidence.

Although the author provides thoughtful and well-balanced discussions of the ideas and roles of such figures as Joachim von Ribbentrop and Hermann Göring, and also makes a serious effort to do justice to the leadership of English Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, there are simply too many errors, omissions, and unsubstantiated assertions in the book to warrant its use by serious scholars. We see here many of the ancient clichés about the peace settlement of 1919 and the Weimar Republic. France is armed to the teeth, and Poland is similarly equipped. Although both Adolf Hitler and Joseph Goebbels announced the coup in Austria and the killing of Austrian Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss the day before it happened, Schmidt still imagines it was all a local effort in Vienna. Since he is unfamiliar with German military activities, there is no reference to the decision to violate the Anglo-German Naval Agreement of 1935 in that same year. Endless quotations from the memoirs of the interpreter Paul Schmidt include the one about the reaction to the British declaration of war on 3 September 1939, that was shown to be a piece of fakery by Ernst Meier-Hermann in 1958!

In view of the author's very sensible discussion of Hitler's drive to war from the beginning of his rule as well as his success in obscuring this goal for years, a shrewd analysis of the cooperation Hitler received from Germany's bureaucratic and military elites, and a penetrating account of the interplay of ideas and institutions within the Nazi leadership, it is a pity that this book went into print without the searching review it badly needed.

If revised, the work could use a major addition of skepticism about the alleged "successes" of Germany in the 1930's. Was it really a success for Germany to build

up an air force in a world without heavy bombers? Some of the older residents of Würzburg might explain to him that when a country in the middle of Europe decides to build an air force in violation of its treaties and laws, other countries might follow that example with unfortunate effects for those who initiated a new arms race. As the German Federal Republic hopes some day to obtain the permanent seat on the Security Council of the United Nations Organization that the Weimar Republic obtained on the Council of the League of Nations in 1926, giving up that sign of status in 1933 as a recognized great power may no longer look like so great an accomplishment. Only one other example: one might compare the twelve years it took after 1918 for the last occupation troops to leave Germany with the forty-nine years after 1945.

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Hitler's Ghettos: Voices from a Beleaguered Society 1939–1944.

By Gustavo Corni. Translated from the Italian by Nicola Rudge Iannelli. London: Arnold (co-published in the United States by Oxford University Press). 2003. Pp. x + 358. \$24.95. ISBN 0 340 76246 2.

Whatever was in the minds of the editors of Arnold Publishers when they let this manuscript, translated from the Italian, go forward for publication encrusted with a ponderous prose, with an academic presentation foreign to English-language readers, and with an unnecessarily cumbersome bibliographical apparatus? And whatever are the expectations of Oxford University Press, the United States distributors, when they market this volume to an undergraduate audience whose instructors presumably seek to promote literacy, clarity, and scholarly fluency?

Gustavo Corni, a professor of contemporary history at the University of Trento, Italy, wrote this manuscript with an entirely respectable objective — to analyze for his readers a large corpus of diaries, memoirs, and secondary literature on the East European ghettos imposed upon the Jews by the Nazis during the course of the Holocaust. The subject is important, and deserves a good synthesis. Unfortunately, because of linguistic limitations, his work omits a large volume of material in Yiddish, Hebrew, and Polish — a serious but perhaps not fatal deficiency, given the very considerable volume of material the author has read in English and German. Corni does not claim to be definitive. However, he does demand the attention of English-language readers over the course of more than three hundred pages, and this is the main problem with this book.

Readers will know that something is amiss when they see authors' first