

less and less relevant by the beginning of the war and especially by the invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941. Still, even through the bleakest, most abject conditions of the genocide, many of Geheran's subjects remained unshakable in their patriotism, continuing to uphold distinctions between Germans and Nazis and having faith in the innocence (and ignorance) of the German general public.

It is commendable that Geheran devotes so much attention to masculinity, but his work might have benefited from adding more nuance to the category, taking into account, for example, men's roles as fathers or husbands and treating masculine ideals beyond notions of military "hardness" and courage. At times his account also risks reifying the dichotomy between German and Jewish identities, overlooking the efforts of so many Jewish Germans to harmonize their Jewish faith, heritage, or community belonging with a commitment to German culture and society, a dynamic which animates so much of German-Jewish history from the eighteenth through the twentieth centuries. Still, despite these minor concerns, *Comrades Betrayed* is an impressive, well-crafted, and persuasive work, an enormously valuable contribution to German history, Jewish history, and the history of the Holocaust, which vividly and compellingly humanizes a unique group of the Nazis' victims.

doi:10.1017/S000893892200019X

## **Rosenbergs Elite und ihr Nachleben. Akademiker im Dritten Reich und nach 1945**

**By Ekkehard Henschke. Vienna and Cologne: Böhlau, 2020. Pp. 378. €32.99 (HB). ISBN 978-3-412-51923-0.**

Ingo Haar

University of Vienna

The Rosenberg office, named after Alfred Rosenberg (1892–1946), was one of the most important cultural institutions of the Third Reich. It was supposed to control, train, and indoctrinate the functionaries of the party, the cultural sector, and, more generally, German society in accordance with National Socialist ideology. That is why Rosenberg was also referred to as the chief ideologist of the Third Reich. His influence on the NSDAP foreign policy office has still not been researched. His office as a whole may have been more concerned with ideological control than with political practice. However, Rosenberg had great success in organizing the 1936 Olympic Games. In July 1942, he was made the Reich Minister for the Occupied Eastern Territories. He was Senior Minister of the Civil Government in the Baltic States, Ukraine, and Belarus. He also may have worked with a team of experts on the Hunger Plan for the Soviet Union, which killed millions of Russians. Two representatives of his office were members of the Wannsee Conference that preceded the deportation of European Jews to death camps in the East. When Rainer Bollmus wrote his first monograph on the Rosenberg office in 1970, he invented the story of an office in which Rosenberg, as an ideological agitator, censured Hitler's ministers and vied for influence. Until then, the archives in East Europe and the GDR were not yet open, leaving room for many errors and misjudgments about Rosenberg's role in the Third Reich. The story of how he influenced Nazi politics in the cultural field and the genocide of the Jews has not been written until today. In the meantime, German historical scholarship has rejected the old narrative that the Nazis were at odds with one another and were ineffective.

The new study by Ekkehard Henschke is therefore all the more interesting. The author promises a new approach not only to the history of the Nazi government but to the influence of the most radical Nazi ideologies on the politics of the Federal Republic of Germany. Already in his introduction, Henschke clarifies that his study will not consist of re-explaining Rosenberg's influence on Hitler, the NSDAP, and Rosenberg's own foreign policy toward the Soviet Union, but that it competes with more recent studies on the history of the Federal Republic, which were to a significant extent based on the rehiring of former National Socialists. Even so, he does not speak to their influence on the early Federal Republic (14). Surprisingly, his first chapter is not about National Socialism and Rosenberg but about early right-wing extremism in West Germany.

As a litmus test for the influence of National Socialists in the Federal Republic, the author identifies the Unitarians, the German Cultural Work of the European Spirit, and other national religious associations (28). He is of the opinion that Nazi ideology shaped perceptions of West German society in the 1950s among up to a third of the total population—that is, the part of the population that approved of the extermination of the Jews and believed in the justified intellectual supremacy of the Aryans. The paradox is that Henschke takes the influence of what he calls Rosenberg's elite on the ideology of right-wing extremism in the Federal Republic, but not on German institutions, as a given. However, can their influence be observed, for example, in their participation and success in Konrad Adenauer's foreign policy toward the Soviet Union? The author cites Georg Leibbrandt, who was Rosenberg's representative in the Foreign Policy Office of the NSDAP until 1939 and later head of the Ministry for Occupied Eastern Territories. He advised Adenauer on Eastern issues but had been a participant in the Wannsee Conference in 1942. As a participant, he was hardly suitable for an official post under Adenauer, although he received the Federal Merit Medal of the Federal Republic of Germany. Here Henschke makes evaluations that are irritatingly contradictory. On the one hand, he writes about Leibbrandt's participation in the Wannsee Conference; on the other hand, he believes that Leibbrandt was not involved in any extermination orders.

In his second chapter, on Alfred Rosenberg as Reich Minister, Henschke returns to Leibbrandt but only repeats the opinions raised in the first chapter. He mentions the so-called Leibbrandt Collection, which is based on statistical reports on Russian-German villages and their inhabitants collected on-site by Georg Stumpp. All of this is familiar from earlier research by Meir Buchsweiler and Michael Fahlbusch. More insights are expected from a new study regarding Rosenberg's elite: there should first be a thorough review of the state of research, and then further, new insightful research.

Moreover, Leibbrandt signed an order to murder Jews in East Europe. The trial against him was discontinued, not because he was innocent—as Henschke suspects—but because so-called desk offenders (*Schreibtischtäter*) could not be convicted under German criminal law. Only executioners working on the site of the crime could be charged and convicted.

The statistical census of the German villagers in East Europe was accompanied by the murder of “mixed” spouses and Russian-Jewish neighbors. Here Henschke misjudges the findings and circumstances a second time, as Stumpp was also involved in the murder of Jews and Russians. In order to come to this conclusion, the author would only have to take a careful look at the current state of research or do some detailed and thorough research of his own. In fact, Henschke appears not to want to acknowledge these facts, but a thorough account of Rosenberg's elite has to include the Ministry for Occupied Eastern Territories, the Hunger Plan for the Soviet Union, and the Holocaust.

Henschke is interested in something else. His research focuses on moral judgments about former war criminals and Nazi party ideologues. He then expands this in the third chapter by writing very broadly about Rosenbergian professors at the universities of Greifswald, Leipzig, and Berlin. Here he gives insights into numerous biographies and individual stories but without ultimately clarifying whether the Rosenbergians succeeded in bringing the German universities under their control. By endlessly disseminating anecdotal stories and

getting lost in his love of details, Henschke gambles away every chance of a more in-depth analysis.

Henschke's goal, at which he duly arrives, is to assess Rosenberg's people as "good" citizens once they renounce National Socialism and pursue a career in German institutions, and "bad" citizens if they do not renounce Nazi jargon or old networks. It is fatal when the desire to make moral judgments about an entire generation renders the subtleties of individual biographies irrelevant. It is even worse when a study attempting to write the story of Rosenberg's elite falls apart into details and anecdotes without working on a unifying question. All these functionaries around and with Rosenberg were antisemites, believed in the superiority of the White race, and supported Hitler, even though they came from different backgrounds. Irritatingly, Henschke does not pay attention to the elites who were driven out of Germany or killed by Rosenberg's propaganda and actions abroad.

A chapter about Rosenberg's enemies outside the NSDAP, in the milieu of exiles and emigrants, is absent. The milieus from which Rosenberg's elite emerged are not that different. None of the Rosenbergs came from a liberal background or even from the labor movement; they all belonged to nationalist or antisemitic associations of the Weimar Republic. In the end, Henschke seems to imply that many Nazi perpetrators broke away from Rosenberg's ideology after the war, while others did not, which is a somewhat banal finding. The value of this study is not immediately apparent: rather, one has to tease out the conclusion from a large number of individual biographies. Apparently, Adenauer's Germany was not able to find employees and civil servants coming from the labor movement or the Liberal Democrats. But what does that mean for the further history of the Federal Republic of Germany, in which the academic elite traditionally had the say as state officials?

doi:10.1017/S0008938922000139

## **Builders of the Third Reich: The Organisation Todt and Nazi Forced Labour**

**By Charles Dick. London: Bloomsbury, 2021. Pp. ix + 265. £85 (HB). ISBN 978-1350182660.**

Kim Christian Priemel

University of Oslo

For many years, the Organisation Todt (OT), the giant engineering organization which literally paved the German occupation of Europe, was relegated to the background of historical interest. Overshadowed by other Nazi agencies, the OT was deemed too technical to merit more piercing analysis than the occasional, sweeping remark in military histories. That view was systematically perpetuated by those writers who had a vested interest in keeping the organization at arm's length from Nazi-era crimes, including its second head Albert Speer and his deputy-*cum*-antagonist Franz Xaver Dorsch, but also right-wing historians such as Franz Seidler, who were able to dominate discussions of the subject thanks to its obscurity.

However, over the past twenty-five years, the picture has changed significantly. With the twin boom of the history of forced labor and business history, the OT could no longer remain "below the radar" (8). Several authors, among them Edith Raim and Marc Buggeln, uncovered the OT's role in the exploitation of forced labor in general and concentration camp