Hitler, the Germans, and the Final Solution

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Recommended Citation
Available at: https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol62/iss2/17

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cables at sea. However, British naval superiority ensured that damage from German attacks could be quickly repaired. Despite later German successes in using submarines to attack undersea cables, geography and infrastructure left Great Britain as the hub of the remaining international communications system. While some of this story will be broadly familiar to readers of Barbara Tuchman’s classic study *The Zimmerman Telegram*, Winkler moves well beyond Tuchman’s work, describing how Britain’s information blockade emerged as a coordinated effort that complemented and reinforced its naval and economic blockades of Germany.

Initially, many in the U.S. government and Navy were sympathetic to British efforts. Even while neutral, the U.S. Navy cooperated, by closing German wireless stations in the United States. However, the British stranglehold on German communications had the effect of leaving the United States dependent on British cables to Europe and Latin America. British monitoring of cable traffic, a valuable source of military intelligence, also yielded commercial information that was used to further British trade—often against U.S. commercial interests. Reliable reporting of news from Germany became impossible, leaving the neutral American press dependent on British cables to Europe and Latin America. British monitoring of cable traffic, a valuable source of military intelligence, also yielded commercial information that was used to further British trade—often against U.S. commercial interests. Reliable reporting of news from Germany became impossible, leaving the neutral American press dependent on British cables to Europe and Latin America.

In response, several U.S. government agencies moved to build an American cable network, but they were hampered by British control of raw materials. Others turned to emerging technology. Largely through Navy efforts, the United States ended World War I with the largest radio network in the world. However, the lack of a coordinated U.S. strategy and poor interagency coordination ultimately prevented the nation from dominating the international communications system after the war. Winkler asserts that the lessons learned from this failure provided the impetus for American dominance of international communications in years following the Second World War.

This is an excellent book with a compelling story. Winkler deftly handles a complex topic that cuts across issues of naval history, intelligence, economics, and technological change. *Nexus* is well worth the time of any naval officer contemplating the sources of American dependence in a networked age.

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This insightful collection of essays from the leading scholar of the Third Reich is a must-read for any serious student of the Second World War. Kershaw’s mastery of the intricacies of the Nazi regime is second to none, and he approaches the historical controversies surrounding its reign of terror in as calm and deliberate a manner as the topic permits. Kershaw’s essays cover a variety of topics, but he frequently returns to the questions surrounding Adolf Hitler’s direct involvement in implementing the
“Final Solution” and how a nation so seemingly advanced could have carried out such monstrous crimes. The crux of Kershaw’s argument is that the führer’s “charismatic domination” of the German people through a potent mix of ideological zeal coupled with his great skills in the art of propaganda paved the way for the “Final Solution.”

On 30 January 1939, Hitler delivered a lengthy speech in the Reichstag in which he threatened the “annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe” should the Jews “succeed in plunging the nations once more into a world war.” As Kershaw notes, Hitler and his underlings would repeatedly cite that “prophecy” over the course of the next three years, as planning for the “Final Solution” intensified. (Interestingly, as the war dragged on, the date of the “prophecy” speech was deliberately altered by the regime in its propaganda broadcasts to 1 September 1939, to link it with the onset of the war.) In 1942 alone, Hitler referred to his “prophecy” in four nationally broadcast radio addresses designed to, as Kershaw puts it, “condition the general population against humanitarian sympathy for the Jews” and, most disturbingly, signal to the regime’s insiders Hitler’s “knowledge and approval of the genocide.”

Kershaw believes that one of the major milestones on the road to a “comprehensive solution” of the “Jewish question” was Hitler’s declaration of war against the United States on 11 December 1941. The propaganda minister, Joseph Goebbels, noted in his diary on 13 December that “the Führer is determined to make a clean sweep. . . . The world war is here. The annihilation of the Jews must be the necessary consequence.” A little over five weeks later, the infamous Wannsee Conference convened to plan, as SS-Obergruppenführer Reinhard Heydrich put it, “the coming final solution of the Jewish question.” What had until that point been a localized and somewhat “inefficient” extermination effort was transformed into a Reich-wide, comprehensive genocide. None of this, as Goebbels noted in March 1942, was possible without the führer’s presence as the “unswerving champion and spokesman of a radical solution” to the “Jewish question.”

Kershaw is to be commended for this collection of essays, which, coupled with a reading of his two-volume biography of Hitler, should be required reading for any serious student of Nazi Germany and the Holocaust. We owe a debt to Kershaw for the unpleasant but essential enterprise of helping future generations grapple with one of the most squalid episodes in the history of mankind.

STEPHEN KNOTT
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John Blake’s book is a masterful short course on the maritime history of Western civilization and chart making as it has evolved through time. It traces the history of sea charts from thirteenth-century portolan wind charts to the diagrammatic charts used to describe pivotal phases of the sea operations during the first Gulf war, in 1991. The sea chart was particularly important to