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The Halder War Diary 1939-1942

D.E. Showalter

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Forces in Europe), he has something to say about both.

Sigal follows a straightforward outline to make his case. He does not need to plot a historical thriller: most readers know the story. It holds their interest without his "painting the sunset." He traces in some detail the steps that the Japanese leader took in reaching the decision to accept the terms of the Potsdam declaration. Relying on postwar testimony and both official and personal records, he reports the public debates, private misgivings and secret end-runs on the President and the Emperor by bureaucrats frustrated by the superiors' position on the war.

Sigal pulls no punches in describing behavior and attitudes that might have earned war crimes trials for some of the victors. He levies no accusations, but draws out lessons for the present age. For example, he comments on General Curtis LeMay's arbitrary method of estimating when the end of the war would come. " 'So we felt that if there were no targets left in Japan, certainly there wouldn't be much war left.' "

"Such habits of mind do more than reinforce interservice rivalry, however. They identify war termination with the physical destruction of the other side and ignore the political nature of a decision to sue for peace. It is a confusion that could make nuclear war termination impossible."

More than once he reminds the reader that "Armies do not end wars, states do." He shows that "states"

are not the vague non-persons we call "they," but living, fumbling human beings injecting their best and worst features into the fray.

The lessons are timeless. We can expect that the same sort of people who struggled to end the last nuclear war will have to end the next one. I hope they read *Fighting to a Finish* by then.

JONATHAN T. HINE, JR.
Lieutenant Commander
U.S. Navy (Retired)

Halder, Franz. *The Halder War Diary 1939-1942*. Jacobsen, Hans-Adolf and Burdick, Charles, eds. Novato, Calif.: Presidio, 1988. 716pp. \$35

Since their initial publication, the war diaries of Franz Halder have been an essential source documenting both the planning and execution of the *Wehrmacht's* initial victories and the eventual eclipsing of the German high command by Adolf Hitler. Their bulk—three volumes in the German original, two in a translation published by Trevor Dupuy in 1976—and the corresponding cost have until now essentially confined them to libraries and to the private collections of a limited number of specialists. Now Hans-Adolf Jacobsen and Charles Burdick have successfully collaborated in a general circulation edition. Jacobsen worked closely with Halder in preparing the initial version of the diaries for publication a quarter-century ago. Burdick is a leading

U.S. authority on the German military in World War II. They have condensed Halder's work into a single volume by eliminating the personal details and unimportant daily exchanges that Halder carefully recorded. Ellipses indicate deletions within a given entry, but scholars concerned with precision will find that nothing of any significance has been omitted. It is moderately priced by today's standards.

The editing, indeed, sharpens reader images of Franz Halder, and of the system he served. Halder succeeded Ludwig Beck as Chief of the General Staff in August 1938. Morally opposed to national socialism, sharply critical of Nazi interference in military affairs, Halder periodically entertained thoughts of a coup against Hitler. Ultimately, however, Franz Halder was a technician of war rather than a military statesman. He epitomized the German General Staff's acceptance of genius, having an infinite capacity for attention to detail. If he lacked the imagination and the force of character demanded of first-rank strategists, Halder was more than competent in the fine points of his craft. Germany's successes in 1939-1940 were achieved with improvised armed forces whose operational efficiency depended, far more than is generally recognized, on planning and organization. Halder commanded particular respect among colleagues and subordinates for his skill in those areas. The *War Diary* demonstrates beyond question his

direct contribution to Germany's successes in the European phase of its war against the world.

Halder's proven ability to execute and maximize opportunities and advantages, arguably weakened the force of his repeated arguments against what he considered Hitler's tendency to take excessive risks. As the Chief of Staff, after Munich he became increasingly convinced that an offensive in the west would not only succeed operationally, but would permanently secure Germany's status as the dominant European power. After the collapse of France, when Britain remained a belligerent, Halder warned consistently of Germany's shortcomings which were obscured by Hitler's unbroken run of successes. However, instead of emphasizing Germany's objective weaknesses at the grand-strategic level, Halder once again sought refuge in the lesser world of operational performance. The army would carry out orders of the political leadership and bring victory to Germany in spite of the Nazis. In Halder's world view, professionalism triumphed over principle.

It was not professionalism as Moltke the Elder understood the concept. Functioning as part of a symbiotic, military-diplomatic relationship in the Age of Bismarck, the army under the Third Reich had instead become a work tool of the political authorities—ultimately obedient, if not always entirely pliant.

The process of adaptation to Germany's New Order was by no

means a simple one. Halder's diary entries show that Hitler's often-cited direct interference generated less confusion on an everyday basis than did Nazi Germany's complex and haphazard institutional structure. Halder spent a disproportionate amount of effort coordinating strategic, operational, and logistical problems among the Third Reich's numerous and overlapping jurisdictions. Interservice rivalry as well reached levels of intensity unknown in Britain or the United States, with corresponding drains on mental and physical resources. No regime waging even a European war with the limited reserves of Hitler's Germany could long afford this kind of inefficiency. Bills drawn up in Poland, Norway, and France in 1940 came due with interest a year later in front of Moscow. Their payment was in good part the price of Franz Halder's limitations. Their existence highlights the distinction between subordination and submission—a distinction the Third Reich's generals proved unable to sustain.

D. E. SHOWALTER
The Colorado College

Simpson, B. Mitchell III. *Admiral Harold R. Stark: Architect of Victory, 1939-1945*. Columbia: Univ. of South Carolina Press, 1989. 326pp. \$24.95

A half century after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, a friendly advocate has finally emerged to present the case for Admiral Harold

R. Stark, who was then serving as Chief of Naval Operations. Stark himself maintained a dignified silence regarding his role at the time, apparently unwilling to risk injury to others by publicly defending himself. Without going into Stark's earlier career, Simpson is chiefly concerned with the admiral's record as CNO during the two years before Pearl Harbor and as Commander U.S. Naval Forces Europe (ComNavEu) during World War II. Simpson clearly believes that Stark's fine record in these high commands is proof of error by the Naval Court of Inquiry, which affirmed that prior to Pearl Harbor the admiral "failed to display the sound judgment expected of him." Nor does Simpson accept the cruel admonition by Admiral King—Stark's successor as CNO—that Stark be relegated to a position in which he would not be required to exercise superior judgment. King later retreated from this harsh affront against his former chief.

The author refers to two specific achievements by Stark as CNO as evidence that the admiral was indeed an "Architect of Victory." In Simpson's view, it was Stark as much as Congressman Carl Vinson who in 1939-1940 drew up the building programs that led to the construction of a two-ocean navy. He also calls attention to Stark as having successfully won adoption of an Atlantic first strategy as outlined in his famous Plan Dog memorandum that was subsequently developed in Anglo-American naval conversations and in the Rainbow 5 War Plan.