

exploited the inevitable bureaucratic rivalry between the OKW and the *Oberkommando der Heeres* [Army High Command] to strengthen his own position as the ultimate arbiter. The extent to which the General Staff were willing victims varied, but an officer whose qualities have long been admired in Western historiography, Erich von Manstein, argued before the war that Hitler should have command of both the OKW and the OKH, because this would eliminate the conflicts between the two and give greater power to the Army Chief of the General Staff. Where officers of the influence and ability of Manstein could argue thus, the opposition of some, such as Beck, to Hitler's bureaucratic manipulation was doomed to fail. Megargee concludes of Beck that he "was neither a saint nor a genius. He sympathized with Hitler's goals and exhibited many of the General Staff's intellectual weaknesses. But he did rise above Manstein's level, and that of most other officers, if only too late." If such recognition came to Beck "too late", then the scales fell from the eyes of others very late indeed, and long after their own actions had compromised their ability to oppose Hitler. The skill with which Hitler played such bureaucratic game is nicely illustrated in the book, and it is indicative that General Halder, Chief of the General Staff in succession to Beck, was reduced to holding meetings with others in the Third Reich's convoluted bureaucracy in an attempt to gather intelligence on *German* intentions.

The generals' post-war attempts to distance themselves from many of the ensuing strategic errors on the grounds that Hitler was in overall command and overrode them cut little ice with Megargee, who demonstrates the extent of their own culpability and folly. There are lessons here for modern democracies on the wisdom of allowing the military to become too far detached from the society it defends, and on the dangers of a purely operational focus, however brilliantly and efficiently accomplished, whilst pursuing policies which are based on strategic chimeras.

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