



Lexington: University Press
of Kentucky, 2013

354 pages

\$40.00

Exposing the Third Reich: Colonel Truman Smith in Hitler's Germany

By Henry G. Gole

Reviewed by Richard G. Trefry, Lieutenant General (USA Retired)

The period of time between World War I through World War II is a fascinating story that has produced a myriad of books covering the military history familiar to professional soldiers. Henry Gole has examined what might be called a second order of history of this era and has outlined the evolution of US military strategies in earlier works such as *The Road to Rainbow* and *Preparing the Army for Modern War*. These two books provide studies of the maturation of the profession of arms in the US Army from World War I through the twentieth century.

Keeping with that theme, Henry Gole's *Exposing the Third Reich* is a story of how influential a single officer was in his service from WWI culminating in the development of NATO in the early 1970s. Colonel Truman Smith was the son of a West Pointer who was killed in the Philippines. Truman himself was a graduate of Yale University, class of 1915. He secured a commission in the National Guard of New York and was accepted into the Regular Army. After service on the Mexican border, he was assigned to the 4th Regiment of the 3rd Division. Colonel Smith was an outstanding officer in combat in World War II, commanding up to Battalion, and was awarded a silver star for his actions. After the armistice, he was assigned occupation duty in Coblenz, Germany, and then to duty in the American Embassy in Berlin, Germany.

The years between 1918 and 1924 provided Truman Smith with the experience that developed him as an expert on occupation duty and attaché duty in Germany. He developed many contacts and friendships with German officers that would last through World War II and the formation of NATO. Both he and his wife developed linguistic capabilities that made both of them very effective members of the Embassy staff. Of particular note was an interview Smith had with Adolph Hitler in Munich in November of 1922.

After his time in Berlin was over, he was assigned to Fort Hamilton in New York, which he later described as the worst assignment he had in his total career. However, that assignment led to selection for attendance at the Infantry Officers Advance Class at Fort Benning in 1926-27 immediately followed by attendance at the Command and General Staff College in academic year 1927-28. He returned to Ft. Benning to serve on the faculty of the Infantry School from 1928-32, which was under the direction of Colonel George C. Marshall. Many of his fellow instructors became Division and Corps Commanders in World War II. His experience in Germany brought him to the attention of Colonel Marshall and that established a personal and professional relationship that lasted through their lifetimes. From 1932-33, Smith attended the Army War College and his assignments to the 25th Division in Hawaii provided two years as a commander of a battalion in the 27th Infantry Regiment (The Wolfhounds).

Perhaps the most interesting chapter in the book is number seven, entitled "Marshall's Men." It provides the best description of how Colonel Marshall and his faculty revolutionized military instruction. His methods of instruction and the capabilities of his faculty provided the keys to military instruction that have lasted until today.

Of particular note is Smith's relationship with German Army officers. One, Captain von Schell, was an invited German student officer in the 1930-31 Infantry Advance Course. This relationship provided close personal and professional friendships that lasted through World War II and into NATO.

Smith was a model officer in the field of military intelligence. Probably his most significant coup was inviting Colonel Charles Lindbergh to Germany where he was given the opportunity to inspect and fly all the types of planes of the Luftwaffe. Smith and Lindbergh were so effective they were accused of being pro-Nazi. Smith's intelligence efforts were so successful that, in essence, he became General George C. Marshall's personal intelligence officer.

During the formation of NATO, Smith played a major role. His relationship with German officers was essential in securing their participation in NATO. His personal and professional friendships with General Speidel, who had been Rommel's Chief of Staff, was particularly relevant.

Colonel Truman Smith deserves this book. Colonel Henry Gole has provided us with a publication all professional officers should include in their libraries.