



The Third Reich in Power

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The definitive account of Germany's malign transformation under Hitler's total rule and the implacable march to war.

By the middle of 1933, the democracy of the Weimar Republic had been transformed into the police state of the Third Reich, mobilized around the cult of the leader, Adolf Hitler. If this could happen in less than a year, what would the future hold? Only the most fervent Nazi party loyalists would have predicted how radical the transformation ahead would be.

In *The Third Reich in Power*, Richard J. Evans tells the story of Germany's radical reshaping under Nazi rule. Every area of life, from literature, culture, and the arts to religion, education, and science, was subordinated to the relentless drive to prepare Germany for war. His book shows how the Nazis attempted to penetrate and reorder every aspect of German society, encountering many kinds and degrees of resistance along the way but gradually winning the acceptance of the German people in the long run.

Those who were seen as unfit to be counted among the German people were dealt with in increasingly brutal terms. The Nazi regime took more and more radical measures against the racially "unfit," including Germany's Jews, Gypsies, homosexuals, mentally ill, "asocial" and "habitual" criminals. After six years of foreign policy brinkmanship that took the Nazi regime from success to success, Hitler's drive to prepare Germany for the war he saw as its destiny reached its fateful hour in September 1939. The war he unleashed was to plunge the world into a maelstrom of genocide and destruction. *The Third Reich in Power* is the fullest and most authoritative account yet written of how, in six years, Germany was brought to the edge of that terrible abyss.

The Third Reich in Power Details

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From Reader Review The Third Reich in Power for online ebook

Bettie? says

[BLURB:*The second work in a planned three-volume series (after 2004's Coming of the Third Reich) this book starts with the Nazis' complete assumption of power and creation of a one-party state in 1933, and goes to September 1939 and the beginning of World War II. In sharp detail, Evans shows how Hitler seized*

Lewis Weinstein says

I am reading parts of this book whenever the history converges with the plot as I write the sequel to my recently published novel A Flood of Evil. It is excellent.

Arghya Dutta says

This is a splendid book. Without obsessing over the brutality and sadism of individual Nazi party members, this book provides a complete and unnerving account of how the Nazis, after coming in power, "won" the support of German people. It also vividly portrays the important contribution of Joseph Goebbels, the Reich Propaganda minister, in mobilizing the people to a war for the "Living space". I am simply swept away by the coherent representation of the details of the Nazi regime. I am surprised to find that how the government can manipulate its action by "amending" the legislation. This book provides a detailed account of the "small" changes which the Nazi leaders brought in legal system and coerced it to satisfy their ends. For example, Roland Freisler was one of the luminaries of the Nazi regime.

The author has done an admirable and superb job in writing this book. Highly recommended for readers who do not get daunted by details!

My thoughts on the complete series: Review

Rogier says

With the same ability to avoid easy stereotyping that was evident in the first book, this book also provides a very nuanced overview of exactly how the Nazis took over the hearts and minds of the German people, but also demonstrates the limits of all that, which were a lot more evident a lot earlier than you would think.

What perhaps interests me most is the clues you get from this book in terms of how early the Nazi's did begin to lose steam. Quite evidently already by 1936 a certain level of fatigue could be seen in the population, particularly in the area of radio, culture and events, where the regimentation and censorship, achieved a blandness which began to lose audience fairly quickly. The original political emergence of the Nazi's was already due more to the relative lack of organization of the other parties, and in that sense reactive, than that it was an explicit and positive movement. The Nazis deftly exploited their moment and used it to seize power, and suppress the other alternative, but from this careful account it becomes evident

that even within a few years a reaction did begin to form, if nothing else in the form of fatigue with the message. This level of nuance was often absent in earlier books, where it often appeared as if the popular support was much greater. Overt dissent had become practically impossible, but listener fatigue is a precursor to it, and these signs of waning credibility are important to understand.

Themistocles says

Like *The Coming of the Third Reich*, Evans presents us with a second volume of exhaustive work. An instant reference work, it leaves no stone unturned and gives a really accurate and detailed image of the transformation of the German society from 1933 to 1939.

Where it suffers (though it's a rather heavy word) is that, because the era is arguably not as interesting as the one preceding it in the first volume of Evans's work, some times it becomes a bit tedious - unless you're a sociology scholar or something, in which case you'll be thrilled. Also, it's really introverted, leaving the interactions of Germany's diplomacy out of the picture. Maybe this is on purpose and Evans chose to focus on Germany itself, but I do think it takes something out of the completeness of his work.

Overall: a must read, again, if you like your history books.

James Murphy says

The Third Reich in Power is the 2d volume of Richard J. Evans's comprehensive trilogy detailing the history of Nazi Germany. To say that this volume of 826 pages of text and notes covers only 6 years--1933 to 1939--gives you some idea of how thorough this history is. This volume has to concern itself with how the new Nazi government solidified its philosophical dominance over the German people, the many steps taken toward rearmament, and, late in the decade, the political maneuvering which brought about the incorporation of Austria and Czechoslovakia while leaving France and Britain diplomatically helpless. As we know, Hitler's next move, into Poland, precipitated World War II.

It's a familiar history. Less familiar but equally fascinating is Evans's social history of Nazism during the 1930s. In the long central section, which is flanked by the propaganda-fueled takeover of national will in the early chapters and the diplomatic maneuvering in the final chapters as Hitler moved toward war, Evans writes at length about the impact of Nazism on the German social structure. The disenfranchisement of the Jews is familiar, as well, and is well told here. But I knew nothing about Nazi policies regarding such areas as education, religion, labor, and the arts, all extensively dealt with.

Because of countless films, newsreels and photographic records, Nazi Germany is visually familiar to us. So is our perceptions of German attitudes toward ethnic groups, their willingness to go to war to right wrongs they felt had been unjustly levied against them by the Treaty of Versailles, their devotion to Hitler, and the penchant for Nazi organizations to resort to violence in pursuit of goals. We've all seen images of adoring crowds lining the streets, everyone waving a swastikaed flag. We're familiar with pictures of formations of uniformed organizations, young and old and of both genders, listening amid a forest of flags to a frantically lecturing Hitler, and we've all seen scenes of masses of people extending the Nazi salute. We've all been horrified at the brutality with which Jews were treated as the Nazis encouraged violence against them, stole their property, and hounded them out of the country. Evans's history makes it clear that the perceptions of

Nazism which have come down to us via popular culture and historical accounts depicting Nazi actions and attitudes, in fact the whole Nazi era, are without exaggeration. As Evans convincingly shows, those years in Germany were everything we'd been told. This is a riveting, engaging account. Once you enter these 6 years of German history under the Nazis, you'll be spellbound.

Andrew says

The Third Reich in Power, by Richard J. Evans, is the second book in Evans Third Reich trilogy on the rise and fall of the Nazi's in Germany. The book takes place after the events of his last book, titled The Coming of the Third Reich, which focuses primarily on the ideological background and rising nationalism and fascism in Germany in the 1920's and early 1930's.

His second book focuses primarily on the Third Reich in power in Germany (as the title may suggest...) from 1933, until the outbreak of WWII in late 1939, which is the subject of the next book. Hitler used his 6 years in power to purge Germany of those deemed dangerous to the German political sphere and to German racial hegemony. Political dissidents, opposing factions, Jews, other minorities and those with disabilities, as well as homosexuals, were terrorized, robbed and ultimately placed into camps which alluded to the horrifying plans the Nazi's had during the War.

Evans does an excellent job chronicling this period of history. He does not editorialize Nazi motives (nor does he need to, as they are so horrifying to begin with) and focuses on "just the facts."

Evans examines everything. Art and Culture are examined, where leading Nazi officials looked to control the art world in Germany to encourage racial and cultural homogeneity. The integration of Nazi ideology into everyday lives is also explored in great detail, with the inclusion of many cultural institutions, from churches to swimming clubs and libraries, all conforming to Nazi ideals.

Evans also examines Hitler's centralization of power after taking power. Nationalists are quietly retired from the government, and potential naysayers are purged from military and political positions. Jews and dissenters are fired from work, and Jewish companies are closed and divided up by their Germany competitors. The economy is examined in detail, as the economy begins its rapid ascent into militarization. Large German firms begin to divide the spoils of those who are incarcerated under the Nazi regime. Newly annexed territories are also brought into the German economy. Works projects including architectural works and the Autobahn are begun. Germany's balance of trade also begins to suffer in this time, as the price of German goods becomes unattractive on the world market.

Internationally, Germany re-annexes the Saarland, reoccupies the Rhineland, and receives territorial concessions from Czechoslovakia and Lithuania. Austria is annexed directly into the Reich. Germany also ends its political isolation, by formulating political ties with Italy, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania. Trade is secured with Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and much of Eastern Europe. Non-aggression pacts are signed with Poland and the Soviet Union (ironically, in both cases). Japan becomes an attractive ally as well.

Evans book is incredibly detailed. Everything that you need to know about how the Third Reich operated in between 1933-1939 is laid out in detail, with all the monstrous details needed. This is a terrifying time in history, and Evans The Third Reich in Power is the definitive book, and part of the definitive trilogy, on Germany's Nazi years. A must read for those interested in this time period. There is much to learn in this book.

Conrad says

The second in a series of three. The first covers the Nazi Party before it came to power, this one covers prewar Germany, and the next will cover 1936-1945. I just dove right in without having read the first one; it was still good. It looks at different aspects of German society on a chapter-by-chapter basis. Particularly interesting were the chapters on law under the Nazis (which shows how arbitrarily they exercised their power, and legitimized terror by deemphasizing reason as a basis for legislation), the chapters on economics and food supply (who knew this could be interesting?!), and chapter on the expropriation of Jewish property.

Sarah Finch says

Meticulously researched and lucidly presented, the second installment in Richard J. Evans' Third Reich trilogy (following "The Coming of the Third Reich") is a rigorous tour of life under the Reich up to the end of 1939. This is not for those readers who lack prior knowledge of the Third Reich or the political landscape of Europe following the Treaty of Versailles, and it should optimally be read only after reading "The Coming of the Third Reich." That said, for those readers unintimidated by its dense, dry nature, Evans covers topics both large and small with a judicious but hardly dispassionate hand. One of his most interesting decisions is to reserve the bulk of his scholarship on the treatment of Jews for the last sections of the book when that is arguably the first thing one might think of when considering Hitler's rule of Germany. But, like almost all of his choices in composing this impressive work, it is a decision that ultimately works. Instead of presenting the most famous horrors of pre-WWII Germany up front, Evans instead slowly churns up indignation and disbelief on the part of the reader on other fronts, so that by the time one reaches the chapters on anti-semitism, its context within the greater framework of the nation is clearly delineated.

Rich says

Not exactly the kind of book one sits around and discusses with your colleagues. My fascination with the rise of the Third Reich and how an entire nation succumbed to the total arrogance of power. How a small band of right wing radicals could wrap themselves in family values, nationalism, use fear to motivate and blame, and in a very short time take over a nation needs attention paid to it.

Every page leads me to wonder about the occurring circumstances taking place at the time. Once the inertia of hate and blame was started it could not be stopped.

Watching the stupidity of people in town hall meetings this summer gave me pause to think...

Lance Kinzer says

Indispensable for anyone interested in grappling with how the Nazi regime operated as it worked to obliterate civil society in order to form a new Germany in which only the individual and the state retained substance. A remarkable study of both the importance and fragility of mediating institutions, and the great

peril that attends their destruction.

Maureen says

The second book in a trilogy has a hard job to fulfill: it delineates most of the "meat and bones" of its subject matter, without either the newness and excitement of the introductory volume, or the anticipation of a satisfactory conclusion, waiting to be experienced in the third. That being said, this book is indispensable to understanding how in six and a half short years, Hitler and his associates were able to transform Germany from an economically ravaged, morally, emotionally and physically depleted country to a mostly revitalized economy capable of invading Saarland, Malme, Austria and Czechoslovakia before the French and the British took any substantive action.

I found this book to be mind-blowing for a number reasons: first, it lays out in detail that even before the Reichstag fire in 1933, Hitler, along with Goring, Goebbels and a handful of others, had a plan for world domination that was driven by Hitler's absolute certainty that he was invincible. While this certainly was not the case, there was virtually no opposition to his quest for power in the early days. In part, this was because within Germany's borders opposition was met with vicious physical force. Also, while other countries sought to rebuild their economies based upon an assumption of peace, Hitler immediately made Germany's rearmament his number one priority upon gaining the Chancellorship.

Equally disturbing is the lengths the Third Reich went to to insinuate itself into every single facet of German life. Not satisfied with mere politics, it invaded the community clubs and organizations that were central to German society. It also took over not just the newspapers, but all forms of media, including art, music, architecture, film, and probably most important, radio. A great deal of emphasis was attached to the children of the Reich: from the earliest age onward, they were conditioned to be obedient to Hitler. Their and their parents' free time was organized, their teachers had to teach the Nazi curriculum, the textbooks were "Aryanized", and critical thought was punished all the way through university. As Hitler took a tighter and tighter hold over the reins, churches in general and the Catholic Church in particular caved in to Nazi demands. The Catholic Church literally made a deal with the devil.

Evans is particularly good at placing events in context: in 1933 or 1934, for example, the lengths that Hitler was willing to go to to fulfill his so-called destiny would not have been clear. His public statements emphasized peace, while behind the scenes he instructed his subordinates to raise hell. Nowhere is the clearer than in the lead up to the Olympic Games in 1936, where anti-Jewish signs were taken down, and *The Stormer*, the most extreme Nazi newspaper, suspended publication until the tourists left. As soon the Olympics departed, Hitler unleashed his forces against the Jews, beginning with *Kristallnacht*, or *The Night of Broken Glass*, when Jewish homes and storefronts were destroyed, looted, and set on fire by the Brownshirts and their confederates, and thousands of Jews were arrested and many were ultimately sent to concentration camps. Every synagogue in Germany was destroyed. Although there had been many actions against the Jews before this, Kristallnacht was a turning point and marked the moment in time when the Third Reich laid bare its plan for their eradication. Many Jews tried to emigrate to other countries, but due to bureaucratic red tape or insufficient funds, many were unable to leave. Adolph Eichmann began his rise to prominence when he streamlined the emigration procedures in Austria, using the suggestions of a Jewish prisoner who was also an attorney.

Even with all of this, the onset of WWII was not welcomed whole-heartedly by the German people. Hitler had the machinery in place to proceed with his plan for world domination, but he also had massive

challenges to overcome. Evans lays out this panoramic history in an accessible way. While never losing sight of the bigger picture, Evans uses everything from diary entries of a German schoolgirl to William Shirer's firsthand reporting within sight of Hitler, and enormous amounts of research and documentation to support the most unbiased and comprehensive history of the Third Reich ever written. It is the only one you ever need to read.

Very highly recommended, indeed.

Steve says

I read this book and the third book of this series back to back, and so this review pertains to both to some extent. If I could, I would give this series 4.5 stars or 4.75 stars. Evans' work really is excellent. The primary strength of this trilogy is how it focuses on the experience of the Germans before and during the war. For the first time in all my reading on WWII, I have a real sense of what it was like to have lived in Nazi Germany.

My only real issue with the books is that there is a great deal of material and at times the presentation gets rather sprawling. I suspect that either Evans is a better writer than most, or that he received greater editorial support than is usual for contemporary books. My overall feeling was that the prose was well composed and polished.

However, there were times when I felt myself sinking into a morass of detail, and perhaps some areas needed to be amended somewhat.

Also, those seeking details of military operations will be disappointed. This was not an issue for me, because I have read so much on the military side of the war. Evans does not completely ignore this aspect, but he recounts the highlights of the military situation with great terseness. Evans' priority is plainly on the internal domestic situation of Germany.

The sections of the book that dealt with the mistreatment of Jews, Gypsies, homosexuals, and so on, became increasingly difficult for me to read, which is no fault of Evans. He is extremely objective at all times yet nevertheless represents Nazi policies with a stark and relentless analysis. But the effect on any reader with human feelings must be to create great emotional distress. I confess that I decided not to read the section in book 3 on the Final Solution itself, as emotional fatigue made it impossible. I will at some point read this section after I have recovered somewhat.

On the whole, I found the analysis of Germany under Nazi rule to be both repellent and yet fascinating. Unfortunately, it reminded me of the United States during the G.W. Bush presidency, although Bush and his crew were poor shadows of the real Nazis. Marx's great quip that history occurs twice, first as tragedy and then as farce, comes to mind. As with the US under Bush, a great many Germans were not too sure of the sanity of the rulers, and yet the rulers made sure that dissent was largely quashed. The result in both cases was adventurism which in both cases lead to disaster.

The book speaks to one of the great questions of history, can a whole people be blamed for the catastrophic policies of their leaders? On the one hand, as Evans shows, most Germans knew of the genocidal policies of the Nazis. To their credit, as Evans shows, many if not most of the older generations were not at all happy with these policies. Additionally, very few Germans were gung-ho on Hitler's military adventurism early in the war. Even after Hitler looked invincible, for such a supposedly 'militaristic' people, the Germans as a whole did not seem to be very warlike. On the other hand, few Germans did much about it. And many

actively collaborated in genocidal efforts.

Reading this gave me a very uncomfortable feeling. As an American, I felt disturbing echoes of how the United States went to war with Iraq and engaged in torture. I know I certainly did not do my part in opposing this, and I also know there were a great many people like me who also disliked the direction that the country was taking and the moral catastrophe in the making. On the other hand, the public space for resistance was very small, vastly larger than in the Third Reich, but without question smaller than it should be in a 'democratic' society.

Evans' work will definitely be considered a landmark in this field and is well worth reading. It is not a book for the squeamish, however, while few details are graphic, there is much horror in its pages. I offer the potential reader one word of advice: Don't read it all in one go, do break it up with lighter fare.

The Third Reich is a great negative example for us to all learn from, and this trilogy is definitely a place to look to for such lessons.

Lazarus P Badpenny Esq says

"...by 1938 it had become clear that the neglect of intellectual abilities was causing serious problems, since a large proportion of the pupils could not grasp even the fairly basic political ideas that the teachers were trying to transmit to them."

Is anti-intellectualism the designed obsolescence of totalitarianism?

"At the Belgian border crossing, huge numbers of rabbits appear one day and declare that they are political refugees. "The Gestapo wants to arrest all giraffes as enemies of the state." - "But you're not Giraffes!" - "We know that, but try explaining that to the Gestapo!""

Erm, considering the achievement, is it churlish to point out that it could have been better copy-edited?

Charles says

This is the second of three volumes in Richard Evans's massive history of the Third Reich. I noted in my review of the first volume of this trilogy, "The Coming of the Third Reich," that Evans does not offer revisionist history, and that "the same bad people do the same bad things that anyone who has read about this period already knows about." That statement is true of this volume as well, but the difference is that this "middle" period is less well-known than the other periods Evans covers, so this volume is particularly valuable, I think, to the general public.

That is, we hear a lot about Germany prior to 1933, and we hear a lot about the war (the subject of the trilogy's third volume), but we don't hear that much about 1933–1939. And what we do is very incomplete. As far as what happened inside Germany, most people's knowledge is limited to the Night of the Long Knives and early Nazi actions against political opponents and Jews. Outside of Germany, or having effect outside Germany, we might note the 1936 Olympics, the Anschluss, and Munich. Evans offers an expansion of knowledge to the reader, with the focus on what happened in this period inside Germany.

Rather than a chronological organization, Evans takes a thematic approach. He talks in turn about the Nazi police state, propaganda, attacks on religious believers and institutions, economics, building social unity, persecutions based on race and “defect,” and the descent to war. Each section is divided into four subsections, and throughout Evans offers not just bare facts but insightful introductory passages and end summaries. This is a very long book, and the volume of material nearly overwhelming, but Evans’s organizational structure, combined with his excellent prose, succeeds in keeping the reader’s interest—you even find yourself thinking during a discussion, “what happened next?,” although, of course, you know what happened next, more or less.

This is not a review of my own earlier review, but I feel obliged to note that my sanguine attitude about political violence in America has been somewhat shaken by events since I wrote that review (last March, so seven months ago). Political violence from the Left has increased exponentially, most dramatically in the attempted assassination of the Republican leadership of Congress by a partisan Democrat whipped up by the left-wing media (stopped only by the chance presence of armed police, since, for no reason I can fathom, Congress refuses to simply erase the gun control laws in the District of Columbia). The so-called antifa has become more violent as well, and just a few days ago a peer-reviewed article expressing a somewhat favorable view of colonialism (the only rational position) was not only withdrawn, but deleted from the journal’s website, explicitly because of “credible threats of personal violence.” Meanwhile, Americans keep buying two million news guns a month. We’re still a long way from Germany in the 1920s, but not as far as I thought, and not as far as we were. True, things in America today are far from being as bad as Evans portrays Germany in his first volume—though “being better than Germany in the 1930s” is hardly a high bar. But at the same time, Nazi Germany is a reminder that things can get that bad, and then worse.

Unsurprisingly, this book’s overriding theme is the well-known process of “co-ordination,” or “Gleichschaltung.” From 1933, the Nazis pursued this process aggressively in every area of society, with the partial exception of the churches, which were directly attacked, and the military forces, which were subject to other forms of control and had a limited ability to resist direct Nazi domination. For co-ordination, the focus was not on political activity as such—any overt political opponents of the Nazis, especially the Social Democrats but also others less directly opposed to them such as the Center Party and the Nationalists, had already been dealt with by direct dissolution. Instead, the focus was on private life, private communications, and especially private associations, which were then extremely important to the lives of nearly all Germans (as they were also in the United States at that time, before their precipitous decline in recent decades). “Co-ordination” also applied to other non-political areas of life, naturally, such as businesses and the media. The goal was to achieve compliance to outward adherence to Nazi ideology, and therefore apparent unity of thought and action.

Evans begins with the hard edge of co-ordination in “The Police State.” This is a good term; unlike under Communist regimes, the Nazis were interested in compliance, not terror, and the goal was to police behavior, not thought. Policing also meant, now that the Nazis were in power, preventing further disorder resulting from freelancing Nazis, whether powerful ones like Ernst Röhm or random brownshirt thugs, except to the extent such disorders were approved by the Nazi hierarchy as useful for some immediate political end. Thus, one of Hitler’s first actions as Chancellor, in July of 1933, was to declare an end to revolution, “for a second revolution can only direct itself against the first one.” This was clever, in that it recognized the inevitable tendencies of revolutions to eat their children, and headed that problem off at the pass.

Order was first imposed by purging the SA in the Night of the Long Knives, along the way killing potentially oppositional conservatives such as Gen. Kurt von Schleicher, who had preceded Hitler as Chancellor (and also killing his wife), as well as prominent lay Catholic leader Erich Klausener. And, as with so much Hitler did in this period, using a combination of adroit propaganda and luck, after the fact he convinced the vast

majority of the population to applaud these actions. Such success sustained the ongoing erosion of the rule of law, thus laying the groundwork for future such actions against other enemies of the state. In fact, Nazi constitutional lawyers, such as Ernst Rudolf Huber, developed detailed legal frameworks justifying this erosion, distinguishing between the “authority of the state and the authority of the Leader,” the latter of which “derived [his] legitimation from the united will of the people.” Such erosion of the rule of law through reference to a supposed higher source of legitimacy is a perennial temptation to those wishing to achieve ideological goals, and very difficult to resist when the ends appear appealing to both those in power and to the mass of people.

Evans covers, at least briefly, all aspects of the nascent security state—not just the new legal structures, but the perversion of existing ones (for example, ex post facto laws); the growth of concentration camps, holding both political prisoners and common criminals who, if deemed in any way habitual, often became permanently imprisoned for petty crimes; and the administration of the police themselves, especially in the institution of the secret police, the Gestapo. We have a view of the Gestapo as the cartoon villains of a thousand movies, portrayed as lurking in every corner, and even at this time, Evans says, “The Gestapo in particular quickly attained an almost mythical status as an all-seeing, all-knowing arm of state security and law enforcement.” But instead of agents lurking everywhere, in reality “it was a very small organization with a tiny number of paid agents and informers.” By 1939, there were only 20,000 such, mostly office workers, and the vast majority were career policemen from an earlier era, not Nazi fanatics—even though the head of the Gestapo was Heinrich Himmler.

Most of the Gestapo’s activities were therefore reactive to denunciations of others received from the public. Unsurprisingly, many of these came from “offloading personal resentments and gratifying personal desires”; the Gestapo worked hard to sort those out, since they were interested in suppressing political dissent, not creating terror as such. But there were plenty of “legitimate” denunciations—the human impulse to control others through mechanisms of power is strong, as can be seen a few weeks ago by the fat and ugly hobgoblin Lena Dunham, an actress of no discernable talent celebrated mostly for being aggressively fat and ugly, proudly declaiming that she will continue to use her (inexplicable) social media power to expose and punish conservative wrong-think, such as of airline workers she supposedly overheard having a private conversation about the mental illness of so-called transgender people. In Nazi Germany, working class muttering about the regime was strictly punished (probably because the courts suspected workers of being closet Social Democrats), usually with short prison sentences; middle class offenders more often got off with a warning. The result was that the Gestapo did seem everywhere, because analogues to Dunham were everywhere. We also have reached this point in America—not the point of prison sentences (although that would certainly please Dunham), but no social conservative can speak freely in America without fear of damaging his career prospects or losing his job, at least if that job is with a big business, academia, any profession, or the military. As the diarist Victor Klemperer said in 1933, “Nobody dares to say anything anymore, everyone’s afraid.”

Co-ordination was more broadly accomplished through “The Mobilization of the Spirit,” Evans’s next section. Here Joseph Goebbels comes to the fore, with his immensely successful propaganda efforts, both in the media and in re-ordering associational life. Some of this is well known, such as the Nuremberg rallies; other portions are more pedestrian, but just as important, such as control of newspapers and radio. The media were used not to disseminate endless propaganda, which Goebbels denigrated as “boring,” but to ensure ideological purity of communication channels, both in content and in who was employed. Evans also covers all forms of art, from novels to sculpture, which were treated the same way—not with direct persecution of artists, in most cases, but by support for approved artists who were seen as advancing Nazi goals, and criticism that often became equivalent to effective suppression for those who were seen as acting counter to Nazi goals. Here, as in other areas of life, Jewish artists were directly suppressed; many took the hint and

left, which as far as the Nazis were concerned, was all to the good. Thus, any tool of opinion formation, including purely artistic ones, was co-ordinated, and as Victor Klemperer noted, language itself was corrupted. He “compiled a dossier of Nazi language—LTI—Lingua Tertii Imperii, the language of the Third Reich.” This is a standard practice of modern ideologues—witness the Associated Press this week requiring that writers refer to people who have undergone “sex change” operations as instead having undergone “gender confirmation” operations.

The section of most interest to me was “Converting the Soul,” which covers the Nazis well-known aversion to Christianity. Most leading Nazis wanted what was in effect a new national religion, retaining some Christian elements and forms, but shorn of Jewishness and weakness, with a fake Nordic Jesus and dropping inconvenient requirements like loving one’s enemies. A few went in for quasi-pagan rituals, as we often see portrayed in movies, but this was not a significant movement outside the SS. Sometimes, though, Hitler and others denied any interest in Nazism as “mysticism” or “cult”—rather, it should be “a cool, reality-based doctrine, based upon the sharpest scientific knowledge and its mental expression,” with no room for any kind of religion. It’s a commonplace that Nazism was itself a political religion, with many of its activities, forms and rituals mapped onto age-old religious forms. As Evans points out, though, Nazism was too incoherent to be a real religion, political or otherwise—unlike Communism, Nazism had neither sacred books or eschatology. “Mein Kampf” was not a text subject to analysis like Marx’s writings, it was “too verbose, too rambling, too autobiographical to lend itself to this kind of use.” The result was a confused mishmash of ideological pseudo-doctrines.

Regardless of what the Nazis themselves believed, as with other co-ordination efforts, the key goal was to eliminate all independent or oppositional power of the established Churches, especially the Catholic Church, such that outward conformity of all individuals was achieved. Evans first focuses on the Evangelical Church, discussing the creation of the “German Christian” Church, led by the ignorant and thuggish “Reich Bishop” Ludwig Müller, and the rise of the competing Confessing Church. But the reality was that most Protestants were happy to be co-ordinated, although the relatively small Confessing Church was persecuted. Nonetheless, the German Christian Church never managed to achieve the Nazi goal of a unified state Church, even though only the Catholics were broadly and consistently opposed to Nazism.

As to Catholics, despite the Concordat with the papacy, the Nazis shut down any political action and closed or co-ordinated private associations, including youth groups and schools. Quite a few Nazis admired the Catholic Church because of its duration and cohesive power, but all were hostile to it as an alternate center of authority with its members having independent expression. Some were fanatically hate-filled, such as Reinhard Heydrich; others more pragmatic. The Church still fought back, both locally, with priests leading laypeople in various forms of protest, such as expelling brownshirts from Church services and “publicly branding the swastika as the ‘Devil’s cross’”, and internationally, such as with Pius XI’s condemnation of Nazism in a famous encyclical. Naturally, the Nazis responded to this resistance by intensifying their campaign, using the press to widely circulate lurid stories of priestly sexual immorality combined with attacks on Catholicism as anti-German and Catholics as “corrupters and poisoners of people’s souls.”

Christians opposed to Nazism fought a losing battle; by 1939 anybody too outspoken (such as Martin Niemöller) was in prison, and most clergy were forced to exercise a “cautious restraint.” Splinter groups, especially Jehovah’s Witnesses, were especially viciously persecuted, with about a third of them imprisoned, quite a few being killed (roughly a thousand of the 30,000 in Germany). I found this account inspiring, how the Witnesses were model prisoners in some ways, but “refused to stand to attention, take part in drill parades, remove their caps, or show any respect to the guards, since respect, they said, was due only to Jehovah. Flogging only made them ask for more, as a sign of their devotion. Forced to watch the execution of fellow Witnesses who had refused to carry out military-related work or obey orders conscripting them into

the armed forces, they only begged to be allowed to be martyred themselves. [Rudolf] Höss [then commandant of the Sachsenhausen camp, later of Auschwitz] reported that Himmler was so impressed by their fanaticism that he frequently held it up to his SS men as an example.” Mainstream German Christians could have used a good dose of the “fanaticism” of the Witnesses, which after all isn’t so much fanaticism as the traditional Christian ideal of response to persecution.

The next section covers “Prosperity and Plunder,” recounting everything from the autobahns to monetary policy to ever-tightening and ever more violent economic confiscations from Jews. As to the autobahns, part of the “public face of Nazi modernism,” here as elsewhere Evans is at pains to point out that the Nazis were always very far from traditionalists—they were radical modernizers, who had no use for either conservatism or tradition, other than as a well from which they could pull up rituals and forms for propaganda use. “Nazism did not try to turn the clock back, for all its talk of reinstating the hierarchies and values of the mythical Germanic past. The groups who hoped for a restoration of old social barriers and hierarchies were as disappointed as were those who looked to the Third Reich to carry out a radical redistribution of land and wealth.”

“People’s Community” discusses topics from farming to shopkeepers to the lower classes. The Nazis wanted to build community by reducing class distinctions and frictions, while at the same time marking certain groups as apart, not only Jews but also any burdens on the state, such as elderly or disabled welfare recipients. To bring the classes together, the Nazis created the “Strength Through Joy” organization, which offered cheap tourism and other forms of improvement coupled with leisure, ostensibly to all classes on equal terms. In practice, though, its services were used more by the lower classes and often looked down on by the other classes, especially to the extent they had to put up with drunken carousing by the lower classes, which the objects of their scorn repaid by resentment of the bourgeois for their ability to afford extras on the tours and cruises. The programs were used enough, though, “that a popular joke maintained that the people were losing their strength through too much joy.” Evans frequently cites such contemporaneous humor, which is very effective in both providing a bit of comic relief and in conveying a flavor of what ordinary people thought.

Ultimately, the Nazis created much less social change than they desired (and they did not desire all that much leveling, for all their occasional devotion to socialism). “A society cannot be totally transformed in a mere six years without huge, murderous violence of the kind that occurred in Russia. . . . The leadership of the Third Reich did, as we have seen, carry out a limited killing action against dissidents within its own ranks . . . and it also killed some thousands of its own real or supposed opponents within Germany, but its major violence was reserved for people outside the country and was carried out in wartime. There was no parallel to the Soviet regime’s killing of three million of its own citizens, mostly in time of peace, nor to its imprisonment of many more millions in labour camps, not to the violent upheavals that brought about the state’s ownership of industry and the collectivization of agriculture in Stalin’s Russia.” Again, transformation through terror was not the goal of the Nazis; their methods were more targeted, even if just as unpleasant for the targets.

The final two sections cover well-trodden ground. Evans discusses the “racial utopia” sought by the Nazis, discussing among many other things the eugenics program of the Nazis, including widespread sterilizations and encouragement of abortion to prevent “undesirable” births, combined with aggressive attempts to raise the birth rate of the “racially pure.” All of this was done in opposition to traditional German and Christian morals—Evans repeatedly notes that Nazis had a purely instrumental view of such things (just like contemporaneous Progressive eugenicists in America, though Evans doesn’t mention that). This section covers Jewish emigration, Kristallnacht, and other topics in a crescendo of unpleasantness. And the author talks extensively about the pre-war events focused outside Germany, such as the remilitarization of the

Rhineland, the Anschluss, and Czechoslovakia. All of these were extremely popular actions among all segments of German society, and would have been, even without co-ordination. Ending the book, Evans discusses the run-up to the invasion of Poland, offering us a cliffhanger where we all know how it ends.

[Last paragraph of review is first comment.]

AC says

This book is a bit harder to read (though it reads well) than vol. I -- largely because of its subject matter which, until the final chapter, necessarily takes a topical approach -- and because so much of the specifics of fascist and nazi social organization (such as the educational organization, the Italian's *dopolavoro* and Germany's *Kraft durch Freude*, social policy, etc. etc.) offers this reader (at least) the picture of a vast and squalid tedium. For all that, there of much of great interest, pertinent and fascinating aperçus and insights scattered throughout; he treatment of the economic material is intelligent and, indeed, quite masterful -- something quite rare in a political historian....;

The final chapter -- on the march to war (Anschluss, Munich, Poland) -- is brief and presupposes some knowledge, but is a superb synthesis.

In general, Evans is so thoroughly steeped in the archival material and in the secondary literature in German, that he is invulnerable to the trivialities that infect so much recent American scholarship on this period. At the same time, he is a liberal (unlike Niall Ferguson) and somehow managed to extricate himself from the smug self-satisfaction and intellectual world-weariness that infects so much of Oxbridge -- esp. in my own field.

If one can skim through the sections that might otherwise bog this or that particular reader down -- the march will be well-rewarded.

Sebastien says

The 2nd volume in Richard Evans' trilogy on the Third Reich. Comprehensive and meticulously researched. Well-written. Not quite as interesting to me as the first volume which focused on how and why German democracy devolved into a violent terrorist regime.

This volume focuses on how the Nazis consolidated power from 33-39 and the kind of policies they enacted, their coercive methods, and how they ran their police state. I've read some interesting critiques that Evans seems to overemphasize the Nazis coercing of the broader German population while underemphasizing the populations' enthusiasm and support of the regime. This critique seems valid, but there is no doubt as to the coercive nature and intimidatory tactics of the Nazi state and that this played a major role in forcing many to fall into line behind the regime.

One fascinating point that surprised me: Evans claimed there was a generational divide between parents and children. As he argues it children and young adults tended to be more enthusiastic supporters of the Nazis, while the parental/older generation were more leery and less-inclined to buy into the Nazi kool-aid. I don't know how much this makes sense to me as it seemed that many WWI veterans (older generation) had a lot of

anger against the Allies and hence were thirsting for revenge... but it was an interesting point that Evans made. Made me think about some of the generational divides in our politics here in the US.

I was a bit surprised as to Evans' reliance upon William Shirer's Rise and Fall of the Third Reich as a source. Evans had some explicit criticisms of Shirer at the beginning of the 1st volume. That said his use of Shirer's work as a primary source works well, since Shirer was on the ground level in Germany throughout the Nazi regime's rise. It made me curious as to how Shirer and his work are viewed (I personally haven't read his work), there is a nice reddit thread in the askhistorians section on this, some of the comments also touch upon Evans' work: <https://www.reddit.com/r/AskHistorian...>

Would seem that as a historical work Shirer's book is better viewed as a primary source than as a history that showcases deep historical analysis.

I'll def be finishing up this series as I really enjoy Evans writing and his historical analysis of this era. I just found out he has a new massive book that came out on 19th century Europe. Another book I had to add to my endless exponentially growing to read list!

Speesh says

There are, I doubt it not, shorter histories of The Third Reich, but none better.

Authoritative, exhaustive and thoroughly, mind-bogglingly fascinating from the first word to the last, *The Third Reich* series, this being as consistent as *The Coming of The Third Reich*, is a look at what happened, rarely, as far as I could tell, delving into the nuances of the why. That is surely meant for the reader to do, that's what I was doing all the way through. For any reasonable person the paths will all lead to the same conclusion of course, so if you need ever to put a supporter of any aspect of the Nazis ideas back in their box, you'll find the means and resources here. If you've had any contact with other books on the Second World War you'll find much of the background to the German side here.

Some of the main take-aways I got were: Those lower down the scale, even those a rung down from Hitler, were opportunistic. They used 'the regime' to give free reign to excess, of their own inclinations. The Nazis in power had made them feel untouchable, and feel that anything they did would be approved by those above them. Until those above them saw them as a threat, of course. Any laws that were needed to justify any policy intentions, were introduced retroactively. The parallels of what Stalin was up to in Russia are startling all the way through the book. That they felt the need to have laws, even retroactively, surprised me, when they had total control of just about everything. But, of course, they were never 100% popular - no matter what their polling figures said - so maybe it was to protect their insecurity.

There was massive resentment for the previous generation, from the young and the survivors, stemming from the defeat in World War I. They felt the generation above them, had let them and the concept of 'Germany' and Germanic European supremacy, down. Humiliation was often used to describe the Treaty of Versailles. Hitler used this zeitgeist and of course blamed the Jews. Though, as you'll read, distrust for the Jews and a desire to rid Europe (especially) of them, wasn't either Hitler's idea, or exclusively his aims in the thirties. There was also that part of the German/Prussian character that refused to admit they had been beaten and as things had turned out differently to how they had anticipated, it could not have been them, or their fault, so looked for people to blame. While there was a whole load of Germans, especially Prussians, who wouldn't want to have been associated with Hitler, that was often because of his lowly background rather than a

distaste for his policies. He wanted to 'restore' German hegemony over Europe and the world - and that was of course something they could go along with.

It is perhaps not for the faint-hearted, leaving no Nazi stone left unturned as it does, so maybe think of it as a resource, a reference to use for any questions other book on WWII you read might raise. You can read it all the way through, as I did and thoroughly immerse yourself in pre-War Germany, but do be prepared to put aside some time to fully do it justice.

I read *The Coming of The Third Reich* on an iPhone (that wasn't easy), this one as an Audiobook (very good) and I've decided to read the final volume, *The Third Reich at War*, as a paperback.

The internet's best book blog: [Speesh Reads](#)

Now also a Facebook Page: [Speesh Reads](#)

Bookmarks Magazine says

Fans of William Shirer's classic *Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* might be disappointed by Cambridge historian Richard J. Evans's ongoing history of Nazi power. This second volume is not a gripping yarn of Hitler's cult of personality but an evenhanded, intensively researched, synthesized history. That said, it's no stuffy academic tome; the *New York Times Book Review* dubs Evans an "Heir to a British tradition of dons who write engagingly for a broad public." A few reviewers take aesthetic umbrage at the author's use of English words for well-known German terms like *F*

Mikey B. says

This is a detailed and sociological analysis of Hitler and the Nazi regime's years in power prior to the outbreak of war in 1939.

The author pursues various themes: Germany as a police state, the suppression and take-over of all media, the struggle with the Churches, the appropriation of business and putting it on a war footing, the indoctrination and manipulation of the people (by the Hitler Youth, subsidized vacations...), the war against German Jews for the support of racial purification and finally the foreign achievements (the annexation of the Rhineland, Austria...)

All this is approached from the internal German perspective; little is mentioned of Germany's traditional enemy France and all the foreign tensions Hitler created during this period. So do not look to this book for a broad European context.

There were times where I felt that the author over-emphasized the coerciveness of the Nazi regime – as if Germans were forced into Nazism. So many photos and films with joyful flag-waving Germans (like on the cover of my paperback edition) illustrate the enthusiasm with which the German people revered their country and leader with little in the way of compulsion. Many followed him to the bitter end.

There was a tendency through-out the book to quote those who dissented with Nazism, rather than those who loved it. The author cites examples coming from Social Democrats and/or Communists who were underground or in exile. Sometimes it is difficult to understand when these opinions were given – those after wars' end could possibly be discounted. He also excludes working class Germans from the evils of Nazism (on page 216 of my edition): "anti-Semitism had become widespread in German culture... though it never had much purchase in the organized working class". Was not the bulk of the SA from the working class? Who was the audience of Der Sturmer?

Mr. Evans almost gives the impression at times that Nazi rule was merely tolerated – as if they converted Germans into automatons obeying commands. The enthusiasm with which the German people subjected entire parts of Europe and North Africa does not bear this out.

Nevertheless the author is very thorough and scores points with how Goebbels' Propaganda Ministry reduced Germany's newspapers and radio to become mouthpieces of Nazism. There was little room after 1933 for "deviant" thought and expression. He is very correct in pointing out the *raison d'être* of the regime was to prepare for war and subjugate Europe. Nazism constantly imbued the German people with their alleged racial superiority over all others. Mr. Evans discusses this racist nationalism towards the end of the book.

He does provide many valuable details of Nazi methodology and how quickly all these came into play after the acquisition of power in 1933. I do not feel he answers all the questions (and perhaps no one can) of how Germany pursued war so vigorously and why they adored a leader who led them on such a disastrous path.
