

Defying Hitler: The Germans Who Resisted Nazi Rule. Gordon Thomas and Greg Lewis. Caliber, 2019. 560 pp. \$27. Paperback ISBN-13: 9780451489067.

Defying Hitler examines the German resistance to Hitler and the Third Reich, crushing the popular myth among non-German scholars that all Germans were convicted Nazis. Resistance efforts from the 1930s to 1945 are included, from schemes as big as the July Plot to sabotage in the factories and graffiti campaigns. Journalists Gordon Thomas and Greg Lewis discuss examples of resistance from every corner of German life: the university, the military, the intelligence services, the SS, and the factories. The book generally builds chronologically, beginning in the 1930s; however, as many of the resisters were active at the same time, the authors jump between narratives to highlight what each sect did during the same period. Some of these storylines drop out earlier than others, depending upon when the Nazis caught and convicted these resisters.

In the German intelligence branch called the *Abwehr*, Colonel Hans Oster and Hans von Dohnanyi constantly schemed against the Nazi government. Their resistance began in the 1930s and continued until the bitter end, when their assistance with the July Plot was uncovered. These men previously attempted to prevent appeasement, held illicit peace talks with the Vatican and, through them, the Allies, and smuggled Jews out of Germany into neutral Switzerland. Oster's deep hatred of the Nazis made him one of the most active resisters: he led schemes, he helped in others, and he connected people within resistance networks. Dohnanyi compiled files on Hitler's crimes, calling these files a "Chronicle of Shame" and hoped to use his findings in a formal trial against Hitler, but the files incriminated him as a traitor. Both Dohnanyi and Oster perished right before the end of the war, but they managed to prove that even the intelligence offices were not loyal to Hitler.

Not all German resistance intended to kill Hitler, as most people did not have that kind of access to him. There is no intentional discussion by the authors of the spectrum of resistance, but they do demonstrate it regardless, by giving examples of the smaller acts of defiance. The Berlin intelligentsia formed a circle around Arvid Harnack and his American wife, Mildred Fish-Harnack. Harnack and his wife opposed the Nazis early on, intellectually and morally finding the regime illegitimate. Harnack worked in the Reich Ministry of Economics and used his position to slip documents to the Soviets and later the Americans. He maintained that he was not "their" man, but merely a German, trying to save Germany. Also in this circle was Luftwaffe officer Harro Schulze-Boysen and his wife Libertas. He used his job as a desk worker in the Luftwaffe to send military intelligence to the enemy through Harnack's contacts. Upon being discovered, they were all sentenced to die. Facing the executioner, Mildred declared the sentiment that all the resisters shared: "And I loved Germany so much. (303)" She, like many, were proud to die as traitors to the Reich, as servants of the true Germany.

Thomas and Lewis also attacked the idea that all SS men were rabid Nazi fanatics. Kurt Gerstein was a deeply religious man and adamantly opposed to the Reich based upon his religious beliefs. The Nazi euthanasia program spurred him to action. Feeling powerless to do anything against the Nazis from the outside, he joined the *Waffen-SS* and became part of the *Totenkopf*

division. Gerstein used his position to discard *Zyklon-B*, the gas used in the chambers in the concentration camps. The expert on the gas, he would tell the convoys with whom he was riding that the containers were leaking and needed to be discarded. He would bury some containers, putting a wrench in the Nazi killing machine, if only for a brief moment. Gerstein fled to France as the war was winding down where he was initially viewed as a war criminal. The German resistance was not well known by the Allies, and few would believe an SS man was not a zealot. He hung himself while in prison, fearing his resistance had failed; he would die alongside SS camp commanders as their compatriots rather than their enemies.

For a nonfiction work, Thomas and Lewis have managed to make the work heartfelt. The prose is narrative in quality and allows the reader to truly feel the story of these doomed people. By using excellent primary sources from the actors themselves, Thomas and Lewis resurrect the words of dissent the Nazis tried so hard to silence. In nearly every story they tell, the authors find the final words of the resisters who were executed, showing the courage these people possessed. At times however, this fiction style of narration goes too far, adding dubious details such as sighs, head shakes, feelings of joy or defeat, which surely can be inferred but are unnecessary. Overall, however, this writing style is appreciated as it makes the reader feel pain and despair, as leaflet writers and assassins alike are sent to the gallows in hordes.

Defying Hitler is excellent for the general public, as it is an accessible read and defeats a myth with which German scholars are already familiar. For such scholars, the work does not offer an original argument. It is a well-researched non-fiction narrative of historical actors, not a work of scholarship. However, the works cited are an asset to further research on the topic, as Thomas and Lewis use strong primary sources with the words of the resisters. In addition, Thomas and Lewis resurrect the names of resisters that are not as conventionally popular like the students of the White Rose or generals of the July Plot. No movies are made about Herbert Baum, Greta Lorke, or Joe the Ox, but the authors have reminded the world that these people dared stand up against the Nazis, and that most of them paid with their lives. The work offers proof for the general audience that all Germans were not Nazis, that they did not bear that shame, and that they resisted.

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