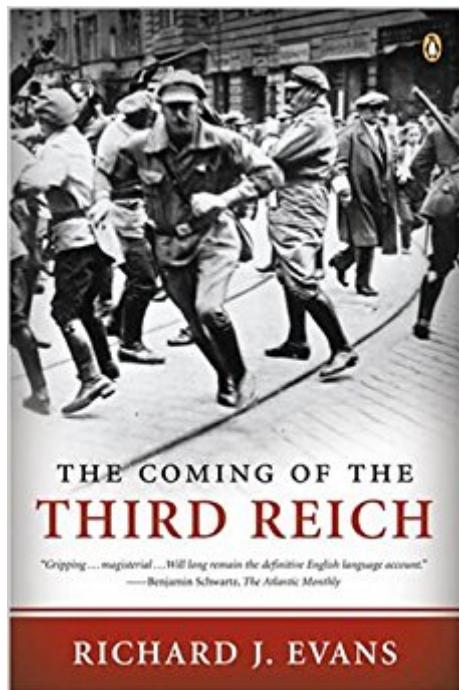


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The Coming Of The Third Reich



Synopsis

There is no story in twentieth-century history more important to understand than Hitler's rise to power and the collapse of civilization in Nazi Germany. With *The Coming of the Third Reich*, Richard Evans, one of the world's most distinguished historians, has written the definitive account for our time. A masterful synthesis of a vast body of scholarly work integrated with important new research and interpretations, Evans's history restores drama and contingency to the rise to power of Hitler and the Nazis, even as it shows how ready Germany was by the early 1930s for such a takeover to occur. *The Coming of the Third Reich* is a masterwork of the historian's art and the book by which all others on the subject will be judged.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I have read perhaps more than a hundred books on the Third Reich from almost every angle possible. This morning, I finished the *Coming of the Third Reich* then I read the reviews posted here to see just how different perceptions affect other readers' understanding of the material. After digesting some of the commentary, I wondered if we had read the same book. This is the first time I've read a book by Richard Evans so I can't compare and contrast with his other work on the same subject. At no point did I detect excessive moralizing or self-congratulatory passages. I would urge those who have not yet read the book to read the preface. It's very important. Evans explains that he is breaking no new ground but that this book is primarily for the edification of those who know little or nothing about Hitler or the Third Reich. It is an overview with different angles than those of Shirer,

Kershaw, and Burleigh and that is part of what makes this book so useful. Rather than dwell on the poverty of Hitler's youth and his anti-Semitism, though Evans does cover these, the focus is on the political, economic and social situation of the ill-fated Weimar Republic and how it became fertile soil for extremism. Evans has written a coherent, interesting, and fast-paced explanation for the rise of the Nazis to the top of the extremist crop of political fringe groups that got their start following WWI. It is useful to remember that out of the ashes of defeat in the war, myriad extremist groups popped up in Germany like mushrooms in a Mississippi cow pasture after a spring shower. The Weimar Republic was a fractious cacophony of partisan squabbling.

Many historical works about Nazi Germany focus on the cult of personality that surrounded Adolf Hitler. And while it is true that without Hitler there would have been no Nazi movement, it is equally true that Hitler as a leader could only have flourished in the hothouse political environment that was post-World War I Germany. Historian Richard Evans's *The Coming of the Third Reich*, the first in a trilogy about the Nazis that takes the movement up to Hitler's 1933 ascension to power, concentrates on those qualities of the German nation that made it susceptible to his virulent brand of fanatical nationalism and racism. This is an important historical work that will soon take its place alongside the best books ever written about the subject. Evans is a meticulous researcher, but even more importantly he is a good storyteller whose easy prose brings the subject matter to life for the reader. He begins his story in the days of the legendary Otto von Bismarck, the so-called *Iron Chancellor*, who once and for all united the German nation in 1870. Evans shows how the latent intellectual seeds of ferocious nationalism, militarism and subdued but prevalent anti-Semitism that would later spring to life so forcefully were sown into the body politic of Germany, waiting for the catastrophic defeat of the First World War to help bring them into full flower. This worthwhile examination of previous German history is often overlooked, or gets only perfunctory treatment, in other books about the Nazis. Indeed, Hitler himself is not mentioned by name here until after almost 160 pages of text.

As Karl Marx once wrote, people make their own history, but not under conditions of their own choosing. So it is that academic Richard J. Evans from Cambridge University approaches the superb first volume of the planned trilogy of a complete history of the rise and fall of the Third Reich, *The Coming Of the Third Reich*, recognizing the existential constraints people living in the era of National Socialism faced. As Professor Evans puts it, not only are men constrained and shaped by the unique and quite specific web of cultural and social conditions in which they are enmeshed, but

they also view these particular conditions through a particular perspective, and through the prism of a socially prescribed set of values, beliefs, and ideologies. Thus, the author argues that in the vast bibliography of works covering the history of the Nazi era, no one has yet covered the epoch in a fashion that does justice to the complex welter of ways, as sociologist C. Wright Mills would phrase it, in which biography and history meaningfully intersect such that one can appreciate what it was like for an individual to live in the times of the National Socialists, and to experience life on the ground as real people who lived through the turbulent 1930s and 1940s did. Indeed, this trilogy is offered in a brilliant attempt to render such a comprehensive history that makes sense of how it is that such a baffling and troubling phenomenon could arise in what was considered the most economically, socially, and culturally advanced society of the early 20th century. This volume recounts the story of the origins of the Third Reich in 19th century Germany, from its very beginnings as Bismarck?

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