

students to local and national historical issues. Many historians, serious about both scholarship and pedagogy, have already adopted these practices in their classrooms.

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Peter Fritzsche. *Life and Death in the Third Reich.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009. Pp. 368. Paper, \$17.95; ISBN 978-0-674-03465-5.

Historian Peter Fritzsche's latest work, *Life and Death in the Third Reich*, is an attempt to study the relationships between Germans and Nazis. In doing so he reveals the appeal of the Nazis on the German public and the depth of collective guilt among the Germans for racism, the Holocaust, and World War II, in other words, the crimes of the Third Reich. In this endeavor, Fritzsche joins other key historians, including Christopher R. Browning (*Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*, 1993) and Daniel Goldhagen (*Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*, 1997). Fritzsche's previous work, *Germans into Nazis* (1999), examined the role of the post-World War I era on Germany, the impact of the Treaty of Versailles, and the creation of the *Volk*. His new monograph seems almost a natural extension of the first study.

The basic history is not that different from other works on the Third Reich. Fritzsche's true strengths are the questions that he poses and the way that he uses his unique sources to address these issues. He states early on that "the following pages explore the Nazis' ambition to regenerate national life in Germany and the allied conviction that to do so they needed, on an increasingly gigantic scale, to annihilate life."

He relies heavily on diaries to view everyday life in Germany the way that the German people viewed it. He then uses these observations to try to understand why the German people went along with the Nazis and how much they believed what they were being told. As these accounts unfold, we can see how some Germans descended into fanatical Nazism, while others became increasingly disillusioned.

Fritzsche concludes that many Germans exhibited passive or even lazy attitudes towards Nazi ideology. Germans often agreeing with Nazi rhetoric or not speaking out against Nazi laws seems to be taking the easy road rather than a case of active compliant participation. Through diaries we learn that even the act of saying "Heil Hitler" was viewed by many as egregious, or often ignored in certain settings. This is also true of Nazi propaganda, like the speeches playing in the background at a truck stop that busy German customers didn't even seem to notice. Yet, "as more Germans said 'Heil Hitler!' to one another, it became harder not to respond in kind." Despite this outward appearance of conformity, Fritzsche states that "insiders were never sure whether support for the regime was genuine or halfhearted; the border between true believers and mere opportunists was not clear."

Teaching History

On the other hand, Fritzsche notes that the longer that the Nazis were in power in Germany, the more the German people were forced to rationalize their behaviors. The bullying of Jews and vandalizing of their homes and businesses in 1931 could be dismissed by some diarists as simply the work of bad kids. When the government started to create stricter and clearly racist anti-Jewish laws, Germans wrote that the Nazis were simply addressing some of the wrongs of the Treaty of Versailles, restoring German pride, and ending German suffering.

Fritzsche makes a powerful assertion early in the book that sets the framework for the remainder of the work. He states that "National Socialism exerted strong pressure on citizens to convert, to see the credibility of the people's community, and to recognize one another as 'racial comrades.'" This caused the German people to grapple "with questions about the importance of fitting in, the convenience of going along, and the responsibilities the individual owed to the collective."

I found this work to be a very engaging and important study of a very controversial topic. It has added to the discourse on the subject and will certainly find a home in many classrooms. As a professor of German history, specializing in the Nazi period and World War II, I highly recommend this book for upper-level undergraduate and graduate courses in this period. Alone it will provide a useful reading assignment and will certainly spark some heated and interesting debates. I will use it in conjunction with the other books mentioned in this review. It should not, however, be used as an introduction to the Third Reich or Nazi social history.

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Ronald C. White, Jr. *A. Lincoln: A Biography*. New York: Random House, 2009. Pp. 796. Hardback, \$35.00; ISBN 978-1-4000-6499-1.

Writing in 1936, historian James G. Randall questioned whether there could be anything new about Abraham Lincoln. Over seventy years later and as the bicentennial of his birth wanes, it is abundantly clear that the answer is a resounding, yes! While dozens of books have appeared in recent years touting some novel or revisited perspective of Lincoln's life, only Ronald C. White, Jr. attempted to write a full-length, single-volume biography. His task was a daunting one to be sure. Previous works, from Benjamin Thomas's *Abraham Lincoln* (1952) to Stephen Oates's *With Malice Toward None* (1977) to David Donald's *Lincoln* (1995), met with varying degrees of acclaim, the latter winning the Pulitzer Prize for biography. White's *A. Lincoln* (the title taken from the manner in which Lincoln signed his correspondence) will be no exception and, in some respects, will be hailed as the best.

White's rhetorical expertise is clearly evident as he weaves a life tapestry through the words of Lincoln, from well-known letters and speeches to random thoughts scribbled on scraps of paper to the recently released *Lincoln Legal Papers*.