

Believe and Destroy: Intellectuals in the SS War Machine

By Christian Ingrao

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Believe and Destroy: Intellectuals in the SS War Machine By Christian Ingrao

There were eighty of them. They were young, clever and cultivated; they were barely in their thirties when Adolf Hitler came to power. Their university studies in law, economics, linguistics, philosophy and history marked them out for brilliant careers. They chose to join the repressive bodies of the Third Reich, especially the Security Service (SD) and the Nazi Party's elite protection unit, the SS. They theorized and planned the extermination of twenty million individuals of allegedly 'inferior' races. Most of them became members of the paramilitary death squads known as Einsatzgruppen and participated in the slaughter of over a million people.

Based on extensive archival research, Christian Ingrao tells the gripping story of these children of the Great War, focusing on the networks of fellow activists, academics and friends in which they moved, studying the way in which they envisaged war and the 'world of enemies' which, in their view, threatened them. The mechanisms of their political commitment are revealed, and their roles in Nazism and mass murder. Thanks to this pioneering study, we can now understand how these men came to believe what they did, and how these beliefs became so destructive.

The history of Nazism, shows Ingrao, is also a history of beliefs in which a powerful military machine was interwoven with personal experiences, fervour, anguish, utopia and cruelty.

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
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- Sales Rank: #1042919 in eBooks
- Published on: 2013-07-11
- Released on: 2013-07-11
- Format: Kindle eBook

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Editorial Review

Review

"a thoughtful, well researched, and well written addition to the field of perpetrator studies—a work that illustrates convincingly the role of Germany's "best and brightest" in the prosecution of genocide."

Holocaust and Genocide Studies

"A chilling collective portrait of a generation blinded by the fervor of their ideology and oblivious to the suffering of others."

Wall Street Journal

"Packed with useful information on this important Nazi cadre."

Standpoint

"Presents gripping accounts of particular spectacles of violence and their role in imposing order."

Los Angeles Review of Books

"With this quest for understanding in mind, Ingrao has undertaken what is clearly a mammoth historical task, and ultimately written an astonishingly profound and in-depth book on a subject that ought never be forgotten."

David Marx Book Reviews

"This is an important and original study of ideology and experience rather than yet another catalogue of crime, and it therefore offers a different and powerful explanation for how educated men became perpetrators of mass murder."

Richard Evans, University of Cambridge

"How did highly educated German intellectuals of a certain generation make themselves into believing Nazis, career-minded ideologues, and practitioners of terror? In compelling detail and in a manner consistent with the best accomplishments of recent scholarship, Christian Ingrao guides us astutely and assuredly through this shockingly normalized interior world."

Geoffrey Eley, University of Michigan

About the Author

Christian Ingrao is the director of the Institut de l'histoire du temps présent. A specialist in Nazism and war studies, he also teaches at Sciences-Po. His previous work, *Les Chasseurs noirs*, was an international success.

Users Review

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Alyson Hardy:

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