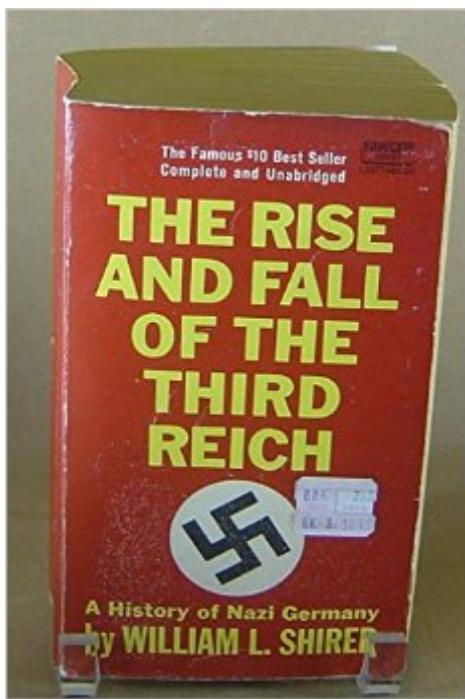


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The Rise And Fall Of The Third Reich



Synopsis

From the Publisher William L. Shirer's THE RISE AND FALL OF THE THIRD REICH is a monumental study of the 20th Century's most frightening moments. Now, 53 years after the end of World War II, it may seem incredible that our most valued institutions, and way of life, were threatened by the menace that Hitler and the Third Reich represented. Shirer's description of events and the cast of characters who played such pivotal roles in defining the course Europe was to take is unforgettable. Benefiting from his many years as a reporter, and thus a personal observer of the rise of Nazi Germany, and availing himself of some of the 485 tons of documents from the German Foreign Office, captured by the First Army, as well as countless other diaries, phone transcriptions, and other written records, meticulously kept at every level by the Germans, Shirer has put together a brutally objective account of how Hitler wrested political control of Germany, and planned and executed his 6 year quest to dominate the world, only at the end, to see Germany go down in flames. The combination of personal recollection and amassing of historical evidence distinguishes this book as one of the great historical works of any time. For instance, he recounts that, from his apartment in Plosslgasse, in Vienna, he personally witnessed how perhaps half of Vienna's 180,000 Jews bargained their way to freedom in 1938. Shirer explains that Hitler believed that France and England were too weak to pose much of a threat to his ambitions to subjugate Czechoslovakia, and later Poland. The momentary relief of Russia as a threat to his domination of Europe as a result of the flurry of diplomatic activity that proceeded his invasion of Poland is fascinating. There is no relief, throughout his narrative, of the brutality of Hitler and such a large contingent of Germans who populate this narrative.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Don't be intimidated by the 1100+ pages of "The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich." It reads more like a novel than a dry historical narrative and -- trust me on this -- this book is awesome. As a reporter for CBS, William Shirer lived and worked in Germany during much of the Nazi movement. Until he left in 1940, he saw firsthand Hitler's rise to power, the consolidation of that power, and the use of that power. As a fallible human being, his prejudices may show through at times, but this is not necessarily a weakness. In today's climate of political correctness, works by historical revisionists -- that purport to show that Hitler and the Nazis weren't so bad -- are not only published, but they're even taken seriously. Perhaps our modern view of Hitler has been distorted by allied propaganda and Hitler and Goering were fun loving and lovable guys, they say. At the extreme, some revisionists even claim that the Auschwitz death camp didn't even have gas chambers - they were added later as a tourist attraction! Yeah right. In that sense, Shirer's book, published in 1959 is refreshing. He doesn't hold back one bit with his opinions. Hence, Quisling is "pig-eyed", Rohm is a "pervert", Goebles is "dwarfish", Goering is "corpulent", Ribbentrop is "vain as a peacock", Brauchitsch is "unintelligent", Eva Braun has the "brain of a bird", and so forth. Such epithets may offend the sensibilities of some modern day readers, but they certainly spice up the telling of what could otherwise be a boring tale. (If you don't know who these people are, buy the book. Believe me, if you read it all the way through, you will become a formidable expert in Nazi trivia).

This review is not of the excellent scholarly work of William Shirer but of the Kindle version of this book. Clearly the book was converted electronically without even cursory proofreading. Problems that I encountered include, but are not limited to:^{*} Readability is impaired by the incorrect placement of commas instead of periods and apparent random insertion of periods in the middle sentences, usually due to incorrect interpretation of a comma but in some cases this appears to be random insertion.^{*} There are many instances of random incorrect capitalization of words within a sentence.^{*} Many words are not correctly recognized. For example "Uve" is printed in the Kindle conversion when the correct word would have been "Live" or the conversion interpreted "attack" to be "a tack" with the apparent two spaces between the two incorrect words.^{*} Since this was a conversion from the original printed book most, if not all, of the hyphenation that was used for word wrapping now appears in the middle of a line instead of being combined into the correct single word.^{*} Footnote hyperlinks are often misplaced and in one chapter the footnote links were not even present. The hyperlinks for footnotes often overflow in the text and in the worst extreme an entire paragraph is converted to hyperlink meaning that a user would not be able to select individual words, lines, etc.

This version also attempts to hyperlink certain key names, locations and events to the Index, however the hyperlinked text far too often is only for part of the word or phrase which is extremely annoying when part of the word and/or phrase is in blue and the rest is in normal font color.

William Shirer was an American journalist in Germany from 1934 until presumably 1941 (when Germany declared war on the USA after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour). Shirer occasionally mentions his participation in reporting history from Berlin or the front lines and admits to having been influenced by the endless barrage of Nazi propaganda. Occasionally his sharp post-war opinions on the characters of the various leaders depicted breaks through. The book is based on the huge amounts of documentary and verbal evidence that became available after the war and the Nuremberg trials. The book represents a huge work of research - one wonders, however, whether the author's motivation is an atonement to his blindness (along with many millions of others) to the monstrosity of the Third Reich as it actually happened. On reading the book (a rich 1200 pages!) one wonders whether it should not have been called "The Rise and the Fall of Adolf Hitler" for it centers around Hitler and his generals and seems to almost forget Goering, Goebbels, Himmler and other Nazi leaders after their initial appearances. A central conclusion from the book is, no doubt, that the Third Reich and World War2 would not have come about were it not for this one man - Adolf Hitler. All the other players in Shirer's story pale into insignificance beside the genius, charisma, madness, vision, evil, manipulativeness, leadership and single-mindedness of the one man. The only other "heros" of the book, although not covered in great detail, are Stalin and, rather more so, Churchill whose vision, inspiration and leadership changed the course of history. Besides Hitler, Churchill and Stalin most other players in the drama of the Third Reich appear in Shirer's book as sycophants, ditherers, brutes or nonentities.

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