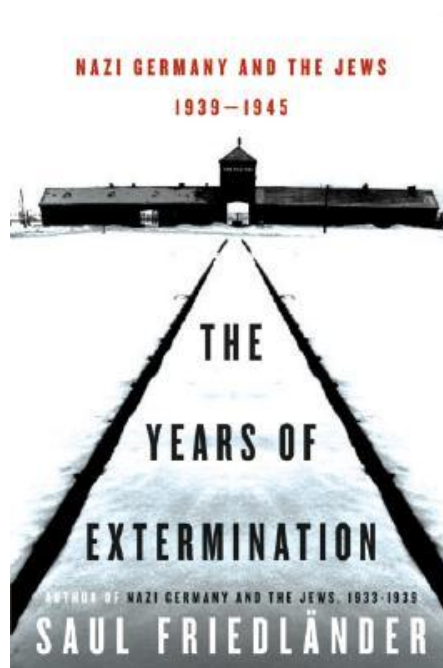




Nazi Germany and the Jews: The Years of Extermination, 1939-1945

Saul Friedländer

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With The Years of Extermination, Saul Friedländer completes his major historical work on Nazi Germany and the Jews. The book describes and interprets the persecution and murder of the Jews throughout occupied Europe. The enactment of German extermination policies and measures depended on the cooperation of local authorities, the assistance of police forces, and the passivity of the populations, primarily of their political and spiritual elites. This implementation depended as well on the victims' readiness to submit to orders, often with the hope of attenuating them or of surviving long enough to escape the German vise.

This multifaceted study—at all levels and in different places—enhances the perception of the magnitude, complexity, and interrelatedness of the many components of this history. Based on a vast array of documents and an overwhelming choir of voices—mainly from diaries, letters, and memoirs—Saul Friedländer avoids domesticating the memory of these unprecedented and horrific events. The convergence of these various aspects gives a unique quality to *The Years of Extermination*. In this work, the history of the Holocaust has found its definitive representation.

Acclaim for *Nazi Germany and the Jews: The Years of Persecution, 1933-1939*:

"This will be the standard work for many years to come" –Daniel Johnson, *The Times*

"There have been many books about Nazism's persecution of the Jews, but none as magisterial or comprehensive as this" –Richard Evans, *Sunday Telegraph*

"The merits of this work are many; it is easily the best book of a distinguished historian. It is based on a great variety of sources, published and unpublished, and the judgement of the author cannot be faulted on any major issue...This is a very good, very important book. It needed to be written before the last historians disappear who, because of the date and place of their birth and their personal experience, know certain things in their bones about the period of the Holocaust." –Walter Lacquer, *Los Angeles Times*

"Saul Friedlander is the most astute, sophisticated and stylish historian of the Holocaust working in any language today." –Michael Burleigh

Nazi Germany and the Jews: The Years of Extermination, 1939-1945 Details

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Saul Friedländer**

From Reader Review Nazi Germany and the Jews: The Years of Extermination, 1939-1945 for online ebook

Daniel Law says

This is probably the most in depth look at what really happened in the German occupied Europe during WWII. It is a mixture of documentary, evidentiary, and diaristic evidence all wound together in a way that will keep you spell bound as you read your way through the madness that was NAZI Germany.

It is one of the most complete and accurate accounts and is a must read

Chris says

(Note: This is a review for Volume II of Saul Friedlander's "Nazi Germany and the Jews". This volume is "The Years of Extermination." Volume I is entitled "The Years of Persecution." I did not realize there WAS a Volume I until I was far into this book. I will go back and read it at some point, but I have many other books waiting on my reading list. These are large books and, frankly, rather depressing.)

Whoa. This book is, essentially, the definitive chronicle of the Holocaust. It is heavily informed by diaries, and the chronological nature of the book follows many diarists up until their deaths (other than a very few who did survive). This results in an intense combination of large-scale analysis of policy, public opinion, and historical events, mixed with first person eyewitness to persecution, brutality, and murder.

This is not a short read. It took me about 3 weeks of regular reading to get through it, but that is due purely to length (and the desire to preserve my own mental health). The writing itself can get bogged down at times with numbers and dates, and can become confusing in terms of names, but those are very, very minor criticisms of what is otherwise an outstanding history.

Friedlander spends a good portion of time analyzing the conduct of the Roman Catholic Church, and of religious organizations and institutions in general. He seems very interested (as am I) in truly understanding the motivations behind the Church's actions (and frequent lack thereof). I do begrudge the Pope his precarious political position, being inside a fascist state allied to the Reich, but in the end I think that the actions of Church leadership were utterly reprehensible. What small protest was made was almost exclusively for the protection of converted Catholics of Jewish descent. (Yes, some, even many, individual members of the clergy did an extraordinary amount of work selflessly protecting Jews. But in doing so, they were sometimes actively acting against Church decrees) I have also come to the conclusion that the idea that the average German citizen "didn't know" is absolutely ridiculous. Of course they knew. At BEST, they "didn't want to know." But claims of pure ignorance are nothing but post-war smoke screen, and an attempt to assuage their own guilt. Now, do I think they could have done anything about it? Probably not. Not in a fascist police state, which made it difficult to coordinate resistance activities. However, when it comes down to it, I think that the average German just didn't care. At least not enough to make a fuss. Anti-semitism was a deep part of culture in large sections of Europe anyway, and this was only exacerbated by the propaganda efforts of the Nazi Party. You see this in some of the language used by civilians, soldiers, and clergy alike: it was "horrible," but "they only brought it on themselves." Or, "they started the war" and now they were "getting what they deserved."

This book cannot even begin to scratch the surface of the complexities of the Holocaust. But it is, in my

opinion, about the best that a single volume could attempt to do. It's very readable, and while maintaining a good deal of impartiality still manages to have an enormous emotional impact. Simple passages about how on such and such a day in the Ukraine, an Einsatzgruppen shot 25,000 men, women, and children. Just, wow, how do you even process that? The number of "6 million Jews killed" gains so much more impact when numbers like 25,000 killed in two days, or 4,000 being killed PER DAY in Auschwitz are presented to you. A million is a number too large to really imagine. But when you imagine 25,000, and realize that this is only killing out of thousands...

Again, it's impossible to really address the Holocaust in a single book. But I think the quote by Stefan Ernest, a Jew hiding on the "Aryan" side of Warsaw, which Friedlander places at the beginning is a good way to put it:

"The struggle to save myself is hopeless... But that's not important. Because I am able to bring my account to its end and trust that it will see the light of day when the time is right... And people will know what happened... And they will ask, is this the truth? I reply in advance: No, this is not the truth, this is only a small part, a tiny fraction of the truth... Even the mightiest pen could not depict the whole, real, essential *truth*."

Don says

Readers should keep in mind what sort of history this is. It is not a narrative history of the war, and not even a narrative history of the Holocaust. It narrates chiefly the experience of undergoing the Holocaust, i.e. what it was like to be there and one of the victims. This is so difficult it requires clarification by various non-narrative ideas, some organizational (e.g. how the death camps were proposed and organized) but others wholly interpretive.

Friedlaender's main general idea is that "For a regime dependent on constant mobilization, the Jew served as the constant mobilizing myth" (Preface, p. xix.) This appears to be both unverifiable and (I fear) probably meaningless. However thought about, "the Jew" cannot possibly explain why Germany began the war (agreeing with the USSR to abolish Poland) or how Germans actually fought it. "The Jew" was no theoretical or practical help to the grenadier in the ruins of Stalingrad or the submarine sailor hunting for convoys in the Atlantic Ocean or the AA gunner blasting at fleets of B17s overhead.

The tragedy of the war includes that most of its victims (from the Jewish victims of Treblinka to the family round the corner from our house in suburban London, annihilated by one of the last V2 rockets) had so little to do with either its origins or the conduct of the actual fighting.

Marissa Morrison says

This book traces the development of the Final Solution and chronicles the deaths of millions of Jews. It is, of course, impossible to tell the stories of 6 million individuals; in spite of the inclusion of quotations from victims' diaries, the scope of this book remains vaguely wide.

The Holocaust is still a very hard thing for me to comprehend, but this book makes some things clearer. Friedlander highlights how quickly many, many Europeans let themselves be convinced that the Jews were vile, in spite of ludicrous propaganda (e.g. "The Jews are making us Germans go to war"); the failure of the

"good guys" (Britain and the U.S.) to stop the genocide and save lives; the fact that Jews from different regions did not, generally, view themselves as a united people; and how Nazism brought forth vociferous anti-Semitism among many Catholics and Lutherans throughout Europe.

I found the first book I read by Friedlander, on Pope Pius XII, less dense and therefore more readable. Here the historian revisits that earlier topic: Based on more current information, he judges the pope even more harshly than before.

Margaret Morris says

Using diary's, letters, and other first-hand accounts, Friedlander (historian and Holocaust survivor), follows the destructive path of Hitler's final solution. Although there are stories of those few who stood apart and worked clandestinely to save numerous people, Friedlander emphasizes the complicity of most of Europe (because of deeply embedded anti-semitic ideology;), which helped propel the overwhelmingly effective destructiveness of mass murder, through both active collaboration and passive apathy.

Donato Colangelo says

Imponente sforzo per raccogliere e presentare nel modo più diretto possibile le atrocità dello sterminio degli ebrei d'Europa. Non si può dare meno di 5 stelle ad un volume ben scritto, scorrevole e incredibilmente dettagliato. Le numerosissime note sparse nel testo arricchiscono ulteriormente un trattato sull'orrore che dovrebbe trovare posto nelle librerie di molte persone, in questi tempi bui in cui la xenofobia sta tornando, ahinoi, in primo piano.

Corny says

This is a monumental study of Nazi state and its relationship with the Jews. It is written as dispassionately as possible given the topic. It reports the facts through diary entries, archives, correspondence and the work of previous historians. The sheer volume of effort that has been put to creating this record is almost unfathomable as is the record of atrocities committed by the Nazis. There is some attempt to examine motivation but in the end the author admits that the reasons are unknowable especially as regards the Fuhrer himself. What is amazing is the complicity of literally millions of Gentile Europeans in this mass murder.

One of the drawbacks of this book is that it provides such a mountain of detail that it is often impossible to follow the thread of the story. The names of many of the Eastern Europeans are easily confused and there are no maps of the geography, which is a definite omission. That said, this tome is worth attention and for those of us interested in the history of the period, indispensable. It is very dense, but worth the effort.

Tarn Richardson says

A staggering achievement, in terms of size, scale, detail. emotion and horror. Friedländer cohesively and expertly explains how hatred towards of the Jewish population was seized upon, garnered and grown within pre- and wartime Germany, how the wheels of the Holocaust were set in motion, and how the monstrous

machine of extermination was brought into action powered.

A sobering but essential read for anyone wishing to understanding the desperation and ruthless horror of the Nazi machine - and the underlying malevolence of the conflict.

???? ???? says

Very interesting

Ginger Miller says

A masterpiece of history.

I hardly know where to begin. How very in depth this work is and very absorbing. Although I knew of the silence of the Pope Pious. How in his Christian soul could he not have spoken out to the world about the extermination of the Jews? I recoiled in horror at the overwhelming cooperation of Vichy France and the French police. The same for The Dutch. I simply do not understand the hate at the center of the Nazi state. The German denials after the war ring exceptionally hollow. The author does not give them a free pass. The "we didn't know" does not hold water here. I don't agree with everything in this book but no one can argue with his research. It is not a happy book so do not expect it. It is history, brutal and honest.

Bianca says

Als je je wilt verdiepen in het hoe en waarom van de Holocaust, zijn de boeken van Friedländer van onschatbare waarde. De systematische uitsluiting van de joodse bevolking in de geannexeerde en bezette gebieden, de inzet van de Einsatzgruppen, de houding van de bevolking en overheid in diverse landen, de rol van de kerken, de uiteindelijke beslissing in januari 1942 over de Endlösung, de kennis over de massamoord die vanaf datzelfde jaar langzaam maar zeker doordrong in 'de buitenwereld', de totstandkoming van de gaskamers, de onwil en het onvermogen van landen om de massamoord te stoppen en de tragische gebeurtenissen aan het eind van de oorlog: alles is even helder beschreven vanuit meerdere perspectieven. De uitgebreide annotatie die het boek bevat is heel fijn, omdat je dan de bronnen makkelijk terugvindt.

Neil says

Two books by Friedlander

I've just finished the two books by Friedlander. The first on the build up of anti-Semitism in Germany and other European countries in the 30's, the second on the results of those policies from 1939 to May 1945.

Friedlander's incredible knowledge of what appears to be every aspect of his subject matter overwhelms the reader with the day to day details of laws enacted against Jews in the 30's and their persecution during the

war.

His thoroughness of account taught me several things. Everyone was complicit, no country wanted massive numbers of Jewish refugees, organized religion wished to side step the whole issue, everyone seemed to want to put their heads in the sand and pretend the whole thing would go away.

I am unable to comprehend how such a thing could happen. In the early 30's my father, then a teenager apprenticed in a machine shop in Batavia New York. One of the workers had migrated from Germany. I remember my father telling me about conversations with this German immigrant. He left Germany, because right after the WWI armistice they started talking about the next war.

I look with disbelief at enroads by the same fanatical forces in the democracies of the European Community, I look with disbelief at the rise of forces in the United States, built on fear and hate.

Carolyn O'Hara says

Excellent, in-depth examination of factors surrounding the darkest years of the 20th century. The author's use of diaries throughout was brilliant, and I am in total awe that so many diaries were rescued and preserved.

New York Times, 24 June 2007:

"What raises "The Years of Extermination" to the level of literature, however, is the skilled interweaving of individual testimony with the broader depiction of events. Friedländer never lets the reader forget the human and personal meanings of the historical processes he is describing. By and large, he avoids the sometimes unreliable testimony of memoirs for the greater immediacy of contemporary diaries and letters, though he also makes good use of witness statements at postwar trials. The result is an account of unparalleled vividness and power....

I plan to read "volume one" -- The Years of Persecution, 1933-1939, and Friedländer's biography. The librarian in me would like to read a book on the diaries, and how they survived....

Nicholas says

I started reading this book during the summer (just after I finished the first volume). A dense and horrible read that one cannot truly describe with any type of justice. I've personally been to many of the sites in this book describes in such descriptively nauseating detail. Auschwitz, Majdanek, Treblinka are all sights that have horribly come alive in my memories which were once dominated by serene natural beauty almost untainted by the terror which occurred 65 years before my visit; untainted of course by an inability to truly understand what happened. This work, though informative as to how the genocide unfolded every step of the way, has answered my technical questions yet has raised more rhetorical, ethical, and psychological questions as to how Germany could descend to the depths of hell that it did. Perhaps the random smattering of nightmares I've endured after coming home from said trip, and reading this book as a sort of a desperate search for personal answers dictates that I'll never find the answers I'm looking for. Despite the sorrow, the anger and the downright puzzlement that one finds when trying to understand the material written in this book, it still remains a must read. You can't help but lose a bit of your humanity when studying and trying to understand things like genocide. It's not hard to see how people brimming with hope about the future of our race can have their most valiant hope crushed by learning what we're truly capable of. However, the

consequences of human beings forgetting what happened, not to mention the valuable lessons of warning signs of upcoming trouble in terms of genocide is certainly worth the price.

Far be it from me to argue with Prof. Friedländer, I do have a couple of issues concerning the book. Today, studies of the USSR and specifically the time of Stalin's massive purge are trying to come to grips with what occurred, how it occurred and why. There seems to be 3 main camps which authors of Soviet history stick to. There's the great man of history camp which believe it all must be pinned on Stalin. There's the revisionist camp which essentially believes society is to blame and the 2nd revisionist camp which believes that the problems were systematic; a result of the political system that soviet citizens were a part of that allows for belief in authority figures despite what criminality lay behind the orders coming from the very top. These systems allow for community, an ideology, pride and other types of things that people crave which draws them closer in. These types of systems also are usually within authoritarian structures which combines fear and propaganda. As it turns out this seems to be a lethal recipe for collaborationism. Clearly, it isn't hard to correlate these three camps to Nazi Germany. Frankly, the most alluring camp for political scientists and historians alike has to be the third, the systematic approach to widespread personality cults within authoritarian structures. In the dying pages it also looks as though Friedländer also takes a similar approach. However, where my issue arises is how he deals with the Catholic Church. The church certainly was an important entity, however Friedländer seemed to have put the church on a pedestal it didn't deserve to be on. Many times Friedländer recites activist priests who hid Jews or gave sermons which landed the priest in a camp yet his writing seems to ask why over and over the church or individual parishes failed to help the Jewish people as if priests were impervious to persecution which we all know wasn't true. Furthermore, Friedländer routinely calls out the Pope for weak or non-existent statements against the extermination process as if it could've mattered when previous denunciations resulted in nothing, if not persecution of priests. Despite the moral teachings of Christ, the clergy in the church are men just as much as the rest of anyone else; privy to the same biases (certainly against Jews) but also the fears any other man could have. Considering the systematic pressures against everyone in society, it seems just a tad unfair that Friedländer would try to hold a higher moral standard for priests than other citizens in a time where moral standards were either non-existent due to prejudice or fear. As a person who is no friend of the Catholic Church I find it strange defending them to a degree (don't get me wrong, a lot of priests, especially in Poland participated) however I feel that it was necessary.

Despite the issue concerning the church, the work was extremely well done. Friedländer effortlessly blends fact with diary entries personalizes the gruesome and almost distant facts that accompany them. It by no means gives an understanding of what these people truly went through, but it's at least a step.

Saul Friedländer's two volume Work Nazi Germany and the Jews certainly isn't for the faint of heart. However, one should truly make the attempt. It's one of the darkest chapters in human history and deserves to be remembered.

Maggy says

I was really disappointed with this book. Granted, this is a hard topic to tackle, simply due to the magnitude of victims, and the extent of brutality; however, the author really did not, in my opinion, do justice to his subject.

Strangely, the author slams every conceivable population for their part in the Holocaust - I never thought I'd read a book where the pope appeared more anti-Semitic than Hitler, but so it was. The Jewish community

also gets a good heaping helping of blame in this book, which is just ridiculous. Not only were the author's arguments on this point extremely facile ("The Pope didn't say anything, so he was secretly in cahoots with the Nazis; the Jewish community didn't organize any huge resistance, so they cooperated in their ultimate demise"), but they did not take into account many of the important factors of the time (German post-WWI mentality, reluctance of the other European nations to get into another war, etc.). Many arguments from other historians are dismissed out of hand, while documents from the Nazi party are used as the sole reference for some conclusions.

I was also reminded of the infamous quote, "One death is a tragedy, a million deaths is a statistic." Though the author did include some eyewitness accounts (mainly diary entries), these did not assuage the feeling that I was reading through a list of numbers. Again, I know this is a VERY hard thing to do in regards to the Holocaust, due simply to the sheer number of victims; however, perhaps if the book had been written in a less clinical tone throughout, it might have helped.

To end on a more positive note, I appreciated that Friedlaender included the original German and Italian texts of some passages; granted, I couldn't understand all of them, but it was nice to get a sense of the original statements, if that makes sense. It also seemed to be a very well-researched book.

My advice: stick with "The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich," and with the accounts of people who actually lived through the atrocity (Elie Wiesel is an amazing author, and "Night" gives a much better account of the concentration and extermination camps than this book did).
