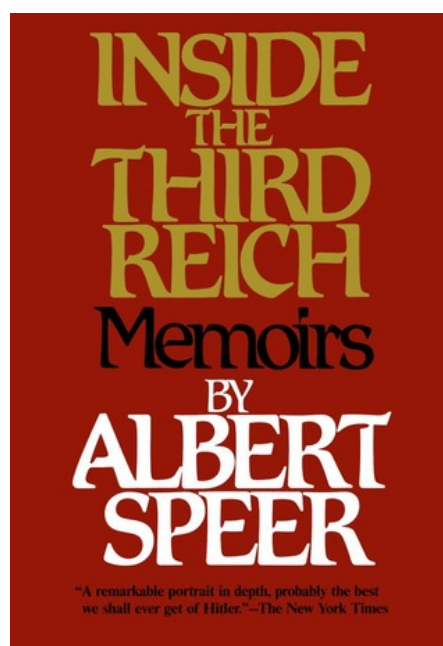




Inside the Third Reich

Albert Speer

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Written by Hitler's Minister of Armaments and War Production, the man who kept Germany armed and the war machine running even after Hitler's mystique had faded, this memoir gives us as complete a view as we will ever get of the inside of the Nazi state. *B&W photos.*

Inside the Third Reich Details

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Download and Read Free Online Inside the Third Reich Albert Speer

From Reader Review Inside the Third Reich for online ebook

Davida says

Fabulous autobiography of Speer's life inside Hitler's Third Reich, written whilst serving his 20 yr prison sentence in Spandau Prison.

This book has been criticised by many, who accused Speer of having diluted the part he played in helping construct a Nazi empire and building an efficient War Machine when appointed by Hitler as Minister of Armaments of the Reich.

It is possible that Speer might have wanted to instill a better image of himself but it does not make the book any less insightful or Speer less likeable.

His behaviour at the Nuremberg Trials is recorded in other literature on WWII as having been extremely co-operative and for having been the only prisoner to have acknowledged the trials as necessary.

Yet when reading his accounts from the rise of Hitler to the end of the war, it is very easy to understand how things got so out of hand and how it all came to such an end.

In the book he states that his biggest regret was that he never really questioned what was happening in the concentration camps when he was in such a prominent position within the party and Government. He had infinite ways and means to do so. He also repeated this statement in one of the best war documentaries ever produced, World at War.

Hitler and the Nazi party had given Speer the opportunity to not just work as an architect, but to set the scene for an Empire through incredible structures. Speer comes through as a hardworking man, and his efficiency and dedication was felt in his artistic endeavours as well as his Ministerial duties.

He includes a lengthy account of his attempt at assassinating Hitler, an account he only revealed during the Nuremberg trials, which earned him the scorn and hate of some of his fellow prisoners. Is it true? Well the lengthy account in the book gives it credibility, though of course, since his plans were thwarted before inception, one can never be sure.

Another interesting account, rarely dwelt upon by historians, is the story behind the last days of the Reich, following Hitler's suicide and the new Fuhrer, Doenitz.

The book is the only real insight into the Third Reich and Hitler's rise and downfall, written by a man who was part and parcel of this important period in world history.

Avery says

Absolutely fascinating.

Since this two-word review accumulated 7 likes somehow, I would like to add more but there's not much to add really. This is a truly unique book. Speer provides a more intimate and revealing portrait of Hitler than any other biographer could ever accomplish. No other book about Hitler rivals it, much less his fellow genocidaires Stalin and Churchill.

Jack says

Albert Speer's autobiography is an incredible portrait of the inner circle of Hitler's Nazi Germany, written by a brilliant, philosophical and insightful man. The recreation of how his career as an architect picking up some government commissions led to becoming arms minister of Germany, and the subsequent events is fascinating in the extreme. Perhaps even more fascinating is the way Speer reveals the various power

struggles, intrigues, missteps, etc. of the inner circle of Nazi leadership and the insanity, inconsistency and downright stupidity that Hitler represented in destroying not only other nations, but also Germany itself. Speer emerges as a humane, sensible, clear-thinking man, who was swept into the events of WWII and for a time surrendered his own judgement, much to his own later regret. The last quarter of the book, in its first-person illustration of how the end came for Germany, evokes an incredible pathos found only in the best drama. The stories of how Speer basically risked his life and perhaps that of his family in directly countermanding Hitler's orders toward the end of the war in order to save what could be saved of German infrastructure and the means for a post-war economy, as well as his aborted attempt to assassinate Hitler, a man for whom he had highly conflicted feelings, are hard to put down.

Johanna says

Amazing book! Goes into almost mindnumbing detail of the bureaucracy of Nazi Germany, so may not be for those with only a casual interest in Hitler, Nazism, or the Holocaust. However, the book provides an intriguing portrait of Hitler and, surprisingly enough, just as intriguing a portrait of Speer, a shiftshaping chameleon who, much like I and my friends, left college with no idea what to do with himself, had no real connections, and was having trouble finding a career, who seemingly stumbles into the service and inner circle of one of Adolf Hitler. Whether this picture of what happened is simplified on Speer's part or not, it is still an intriguing read, especially since he denies prior knowledge of the Holocaust only to have a letter of his be unearthed in which he acknowledges having heard Himmler's Posen speech in which he talked about exterminating the Jews. It is very interesting to read this book in all of these contexts.

Halvor (Raknes) says

I've recently began my research of National Socialism and the Third Reich. How fortunate that I happened upon this book! It's an excellent place to start such an endeavor. Speer was a key figure under Hitler, yet at the same time he was rather an outsider, a technocrat with little understanding of the ideological basis for the government in which he made his strong mark as armaments minister.

The book is very well written and thus an easy read. Speer was very close to Hitler, for much of the twelve years they worked together more like his protege. This, however, soured towards the end when Speer began to oppose Hitler on key policies. Still, Speer writes that he probably was the closest thing to a friend Hitler had during his very lonely years as Fuehrer.

The book gives elaborate detail to Hitler's personality in various situations, including candid settings. For this alone the book must be considered a treasure. However, it also gives ample descriptions of the other NSDAP leaders: Goebbels, Himmler, Goering, Bormann, and lots of other top brass.

As I mentioned Speer wasn't much into ideology and politics, although he quite got the hang of the art of politicking by the end. I'd say, from reading this book, he was never a national Socialist. In fact he doesn't delve into the topic of ideology at all in this 700 page book (the rest is noted and index). I got mesmerized by Hitler's magical personality and radiant charisma, like so many others, and he describes himself as being caught in the mass hypnosis ? which he, as Hitler's architect, the man behind the physical design of the props for the mass Nuremberg party rallies of the thirties, had quite a hand in abetting.

Speer comes across as an ethical and principled man, though, and I believe him (for now, at least) as his book reads, very sincere and candid about his own thoughts, feelings and mixed feelings during the different

stages of the plot. And I also believe him about the moral corruption that seemed to have so compromised many of the other leaders, first and foremost Bormann and Goering (though the underlying reason for Goering's flaws must be greatly attributed to his addiction to narcotics ? his detox before the Nuremberg Trial showed him to be much more capable than the sorry megalomaniacal figure he was when it mattered. As well as some serious sexual/gender issues).

One annoying flaw with my edition was that the indexing was quote off. In a couple of instances I discovered the correct page being one and four pages later than what the index said. If this is the general tendency concerning this error, it might not be so difficult to locate the correct pages after all. Except for me, that's a little late to realize.

I have downloaded and printed out David Irving's *Hitler's War* into which I had already made some inroads before reading Speer's memoirs, but I think I shall start reading that from the beginning,

To sum up: This book is indispensable for anyone wanting to understand the phenomenon of Hitler, of the Third Reich and WWII. Not so much National Socialism.

Erik Graff says

When I was a boy most of us admired the Nazis for their aesthetic: the rallies, the marches, the uniforms, the insignia. My own admiration was somewhat qualified by the fact that Mom grew up under German occupation in Norway and Dad served in North Africa and Sicily. In any case, they were fascinating. The first grownup book I ever read was probably *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*.

Albert Speer, along with Hitler himself, a closet decorator, was substantially responsible for the much-admired Nazi aesthetic. He was also responsible for running slave labor camps towards the end of the war and served twenty years imprisonment--his term being relatively short as he was one of the few repentant war criminals.

Since the USA in the absence of the USSR is now the most prominent aggressor state on the planet and since the foremost charges promulgated by this country and its allies at the trials that convicted Speer and his cronies were "Participation in a common plan or conspiracy for the accomplishment of a crime against peace & planning, initiating and waging wars of aggression and other crimes against peace", I recommend that everyone read this book, particularly those considering enlistment in the armed forces or work with the Department of Defense, the CIA, the NSA, the DEA or related agencies.

howl of minerva says

Denn es gibt Dinge an denen man schuld ist, selbst wenn man sich entschuldigen könnte - einfach weil das Ausmaß der Verbrechen so übergroß ist, daß davor jede menschliche Entschuldigung zu einem Nichts verblaßt. (524)

For there are things of which one is guilty, even if one could excuse oneself, simply because the crime is so huge that every human exculpation pales before it.

Albert Speer was one charming motherfucking pig. He charmed his way to the top of his profession. He charmed his way into Hitler's innermost circle as his Architect and Armaments Minister. He charmed his

way out of a noose at Nuremberg. And with his bravura performance there (and by charming the pants off his biographer, Gitta Sereny) he charmed his way into history as “the good Nazi”, “the Nazi who was sorry”. If you believe those epithets, I have some magic beans I can let you have at an amazing price. Speer knew an awful lot more about the holocaust than he ever let on. (See e.g. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/200...>).

A few notes and quotes with my loose translations:

Speer remains quite proud here of his Baustil in his and Hitler’s plans for Welthauptstadt Germania. Politely he refers to these as neo-classical but the more accurate term would probably be masturbatory megalomania.

Die Cheopspyramide, um 2500 v. Chr. erbaut, umfasst bei 230 Metern Länge und 146 Metern Höhe, 2 570 000 Kubikmeter. Das Nürnberger Stadion wäre 550 Meter lang und 460 Meter breit geworden und hätte einen umbauten Raum von 8 500 000 Kubikmeter aufgewiesen, also rund das dreifache der Cheopspyramide. Das Stadion sollte das bei weitem größte Bauwerk dieses Geländes und eines der gewaltigsten der Geschichte werden. (81)

The great pyramid of Giza, built 2500 years before Christ measures 230 metres on the square and 146 metres high, encompassing 2.57 million cubic metres. My Nuremberg stadium would have enclosed 8.5 million cubic meters: about 3 times as much as the great pyramid. The stadium would have been the centrepiece of the site and one of the greatest structures in history.

Quite hilariously, he includes the reaction of his father (also an architect):

Er hob vor den Modellen nur die Achseln. "Ihr seid komplett verrückt geworden!" (148)

He simply shrugged in front of the models. "You've gone completely insane!"

Some sections are truly a master-class in deception and self-deception:

Ich gebe die Antwort nicht mehr, mit der ich die Fragenden, vor allem aber mich selber so lange zu beruhigen versuchte: daß im System Hitlers, wie in jedem totalitären Regime, mit der Höhe der Position auch die Isolierung und damit die Abschirmung wächst; das mit der Technisierung des Mordvorganges die Zahl der Mörder abnimmt und damit zugleich die Möglichkeit größer wird, nicht zu wissen, daß die Geheimhaltungsmanie des Systems Grade des Eingeweihtseins schafft und damit einem jeden Gelegenheit zur Flucht vor der Wahrnehmung des Unmenschlichen offenhält.

Ich gebe alle diese Antworten nicht mehr, denn sie versuchen, dem Geschehen in Advokatenmanier zu begegnen. Zwar war ich als Günstling und später als einer der einflußreichen Minister Hitler isoliert; zwar hatte das Denken in Zuständigkeiten dem Architekten wie dem Rüstungsminister zahlreiche Ausfluchtmöglichkeiten verschafft; zwar habe ich, was in jener Nacht vom 9. auf den 10. November 1938 eigentlich begann und in Auschwitz und Majdanek endete, nicht gewußt. Aber... den Grad meiner Unwissenheit bestimmte am Ende doch immer ich selbst.

Ich weiß deshalb heute, daß meine quälerischen Selbstprüfungen die Frage ebenso falsch stellten, wie die Wißbegierigen, denen ich inzwischen begegnet bin. Ob ich gewußt oder nicht gewußt, und wieviel oder wie wenig ich bewußt habe, wird ganz unerheblich, wenn ich bedenke, was ich an Furchtbarem hätte wissen müssen und welche Konsequenzen schon aus dem wenigen, was ich wüßte, selbstverständlich gewesen wären. Die mich fragen, erwarten von mir im Grunde Rechtfertigungen. Doch ich bin ohne Apologie. (126-7)

I no longer give the answers that I used to give to quiet myself and questioners: that in Hitler's system, as in every Totalitarian regime, the isolation and screening-off from reality increased the higher one was in position. That with the automation of the killing process, the number of murders increases and at the same time the possibilities not to know. That the mania for secrecy in the system created many levels of knowledge and so gave the opportunity for an escape from recognising the inhuman.

I no longer give these answers, because they counter what happened in the style of a lawyer. Of course as one of Hitler's favourites and later one of his most influential ministers, I was isolated. Of course, my preoccupations as an architect and as armaments minister gave me numerous opportunities to lose myself. Of course, I knew nothing of what began in that night of 9-10 November 1938 and ended with Auschwitz and Majdanek. But... I myself determined the degree of my ignorance.

I know today that my torturous self-examination puts the question as falsely as those curious individuals who I have met. Whether I knew or not and how much or how little I know becomes entirely insignificant when I consider the terrible things that I should have known. And what consequences should have been self-evident from the little that I did know. Those who ask me in fact expect justifications. I remain without apology.

It's so close to being plausible, it sounds so sincere. But note how he systematically presents numerous self-serving arguments while insisting that he is not presenting them. Note how he slips in slivers of truth and even apparently self-lacerating confession... and how this all dresses up the central lie: that he never knew.

Some intriguing insights into Hitler's private world and thoughts:

Möglicherweise war ich in seinen Augen ein erfolgreich in die Politik verschlagenes künstlerische Genie und damit indirekt eine Bestätigung seines eigenen Lebenslaufes. (289)

Possibly in his eyes I was the artistic genius who had forged a path in politics, and so an indirect confirmation of his own life path.

Er hatte die letzte Station seiner Flucht vor der Wirklichkeit erreicht, einer Wirklichkeit, die er schon in seiner Jugend nicht anerkennen wollte. Damals nannte ich diese unwirkliche Welt die "Insel der Seligen". (476)

He had reached the last station in his flight from reality, a reality that he had not wished to recognise even in his youth. In those days, I called his unreal world "the Isle of the Blessed."

Some obvious resonances with current events:

Es entsprach zwar der Neigung Hitlers zum Dilettantismus, daß er sich mit Vorliebe unfachmännische Mitarbeiter aussuchte. Immerhin hatte er bis dahin bereits einen Weinhändler zum Außenminister, seinen Parteiphilosophen zum Ostminister und beispielsweise einen Kampfflieger zum Herrn über die gesamte Wirtschaft bestellt; nun machte er ausgerechnet einen Architekten zu seinem Rüstungsminister... Fachleuten... hat er zeitlebens mißtraut. (212-3)

In keeping with Hitler's tendency towards dilettantism, he specifically sought out colleagues who were amateurs. In any case, he already had employed a wine-merchant as foreign minister, his party philosopher as Eastern minister and a fighter-pilot as chief of the entire economy. Now he made an architect his armaments minister. He held a lifelong mistrust of experts.

Die Abwendung von der Wirklichkeit, die zusehends um sich griff, war keine Besonderheit des nationalsozialistischen Regimes. Während aber unter normalen Umständen, die Abkehr von der Realität durch die Umwelt, durch Spott, Kritik, Verlust an Glaubwürdigkeit, berichtigt wird, gab es im Dritten Reich keine derartigen Korrektive, besonders wenn man der oberen Geschichte angehörte. Im Gegenteil: Wie in einem Spiegelkabinett vervielfachte sich jeder Selbstbetrug zum immer wieder bestätigten Bild einer phantastischen Traumwelt... kein fremder Anblick störte diese Uniformität von hundert immer gleichen - meinen Gesichtern... (303-4)

The detachment from reality that increasingly took hold was not peculiar to the national-socialist regime. While under normal conditions, a turn from reality would be corrected by the environment, through mockery, criticism and loss of credibility, there was no such corrective in the third Reich. To the contrary, as though in a hall of mirrors, every self-deception was multiplied to a series of self-confirming images, a fantastic dream world... no contrary vision disturbed the uniformity of these hundreds of faces, always mine...

And chilling closing lines that are worth quoting:

"Durch diese Kriegskatastrophe" so schrieb ich 1947 in meiner Zelle, "ist die Empfindlichkeit des in Jahrhunderten aufgebauten Systems der modernen Zivilisation erwiesen worden. Wir wissen jetzt: Wir leben im keinem erdbebensicheren Bau. Die komplizierte Apparatur der modernen Welt kann sich, durch negativen Impulse, die sich gegenseitig steigern, unaufhaltsam zersetzen. Keine Wille könnte diesen Prozeß aufhalten, wenn der Automatismus des Fortschritts zu einer weiteren Stufe in der Entpersönlichung des Menschen führte, ihm immer mehr die Selbstverantwortung entzöge." Entscheidenden Jahre meines Lebens habe ich in der Technik gedient, geblendet von ihren Möglichkeiten. Am Ende, ihr gegenüber, steht Skepsis. (525)

The vulnerability of our modern civilisation - a system built up over centuries - has been made manifest by the catastrophe of war. We know now: we do not live in an earthquake-proof structure. The complex apparatus of the modern world can utterly collapse in the face of irresistible negative pressures that build synergistically. No will can prevent this process if the automation of progress leads to another step in the depersonalisation of human beings, removing even more of their sense of self and responsibility. I have spent the decisive years of

my life serving technology, blinded by its possibilities. Regarding technology, in the end, there must be skepticism.

Stela says

Un nazist cu fa?? uman?

Mi-aduc aminte c?, pe vremea lui Ceau?escu, nu erau pu?ini aceia care nu-l considerau pe marele cîrmaci responsabil pentru existen?a lor umil?, fiind convin?i pe de o parte c? nu e la curent cu suferin?ele îndurate de popor ?i pe de alta c? e dus de nas de nevast?-sa, care ar fi adev?rata surs? a tuturor relelor. F?r? îndoial? c? aceast? credin?? naiv? a exploatat-o Iliescu atunci cînd le-a promis, în 1990, celor care-au mîncat salam cu soia, un comunism adev?rat, un comunism cu fa?? uman?. Pentru c?, desigur, nu comunismul era de vin? pentru suferin?ele lor, ci aceia care l-au pus prost în practic?.

Cam aceea?i idee apare în cartea lui Albert Speer, *În umbra lui Hitler*, care încearc? (si mi-e ?i fric? s? m? gîndesc în ce m?sur? reu?e?te pentru unii cititori), cu o subtilitate psihologic? în acela?i timp impresionant? ?i alarmant?, s? ne conving? c? autorul a fost de fapt un nazist cu fa?? uman?, c? faptele sale au avut circumstan?e atenuante dat fiind c? viziunea lui Hitler ar fi fost grandioas?, dac? nu l-ar fi pierdut anturajul format din oameni mediocri (cu o singur? excep?ie notabil?, Speer însu?i), anturaj care i-a încurajat obsesiile ?i în cele din urm? deformat viziunea.

F?r? îndoial?, Speer este un extrem de conving?tor narator necreditabil, mai ales c? nici nu încearc? s? se dezvinov??easc? f??i? (nu apare nic?ieri o declara?ie ferm? c? ar fi ?tiut sau nu de atrocit??ile din lag?rele de concentrare), nici nu-?i reveleaz?, la fel de f??i?, admira?ia adînc? pentru F?hrerul s?u (admira?ie care se simte totu?i pîn? în ultimele pagini). Nu, metoda lui este mult mai subtil?, el se mul?ume?te s? sugereze pe de o parte c? Hitler n-a fost a?a de r?u cum am fost f?cu?i s? credem – c? doar spre sfîr?it ?i-ar fi tr?dat idealurile, ?i c? Speer însu?i e vinovat mai curînd de naivitate decît de cruzime.

Aceast? mare popularitate era foarte de în?eles, deoarece opinia public? îi atribuia lui Hitler, ?i nim?nui altcuiva, succesele noastre în economie ?i în politica extern?. Din ce în ce mai mult el trecea drept omul chemat s? potoleasc? dorul profund dup? o Germanie puternic?, mândr? ?i unit?. Scepticii formau o minoritate neînsemnat?. Dac? cineva sim?ea uneori c?-i încol?e?te îndoiala în suflet, se lini?tea cu gîndul la succesele noului regim ?i la respectul pe care acesta ?i-l câ?tigase chiar în opinia public? interna?ional?, predispus? mai degrab? s? critice decît s? laude.

Si totu?i, acest nazist educat ?i extrem de ambi?ios, care la 32 de ani se apropia deja vertiginos de vîrfurile ierarhiei sociale, care a fost poate, a?a cum el însu?i recunoa?te, singurul prieten intim al lui Hitler, ar trebui s? ne însp?îmînte chiar mai mult decît ceilal?i fanatici din jurul dictatorului, un Goebbels, un Goering, un Himmler & comp., tocmai din pricina narcisismului s?u absolut, a min?ii sale reci ?i calculate, a unei inteligen?e puse atît de bine în slujba interesului personal încît l-a ajutat s? supravie?uiasc? atît intrigilor de curte din marele Reich cît ?i procesului de la N?rnberg. Mai mult, a continuat s? manipuleze cu succes

opinia public? în folosul s?u chiar ?i cînd totul p?rea sfîr?it, oferindu-?i memoriile unei lumi fascinate dintotdeauna nu numai de r?u ci ?i felul în care acesta este cosmetizat de cei care-l propag?. Nu e de mirare deci c? succesul controversat al c?r?ii de fa?? se datoreaz? ?i faptului c? a atenuat vina unei întregi genera?ii de nazi?ti, care, fiind mai jos pe scara social?, se puteau ascunde în spatele lui „n-am ?tiut” chiar mai bine decît autorul.

Mijloacele prin care Speer a reu?it s?-i manipuleze pe cei din jur, de la judec?tori la simplul cititor sînt pu?ine, dar foarte eficace: fraza elegant? cu accente sincere, sugestia unui puternic conflict interior pe de o parte între dragostea pentru Hitler ?i cea pentru Germania, iar pe de alta între ambi?iile personale ?i remu?c?rile de cîte ori era nevoit s? fac? abuz de putere, jum?t?ile de adev?r prezentate ca adev?ruri întregi, punerea în eviden?? a meritelor personale avînd totodat? aerul c? e jenat c? trebuie s? le aduc? în discu?ie ?i viceversa, recunoa?terea aparent sincer? a gre?elilor în timp ce sugereaz? discret c? ele sînt pardonabile, umane sau pur ?i simplu involuntare.

Aceste mijloace sînt vizibile, la o lectur? atent?, chiar de la primele pagini, unde autorul poveste?te cum ?i-a început cariera politic?. Pe un ton nostalgic ?i indulgent, el î?i aminte?te de seara aceea (magic??) din ianuarie 1931, cînd studen?ii lui l-au luat „pe sus” la o cuvîntare a lui Hitler din parcul „Hasenheide”, ?inut? într-o sal? studen?easc? arhiplin?. Entuziasmul publicului la apari?ia lui Hitler l-a impresionat pe autor, ca ?i imaginea de burghez cumsecade ?i cu scaun la cap pe care o oferea ?i care, împreun? cu discursul în form? de expozeu istoric ?inut cu voce sc?zut?, aproape timid?, contrazicea imaginea „propagandei adverse, care-l prezenta ca pe un demagog isteric, un fanatic în uniform?, zbierînd ?i gesticulînd.”

Aceast? singur? întîlnire este suficient? pentru a-l convinge pe tîn?rul Speer, pîn? atunci apolitic, s? se înscrie în partid, gest care-l va pune mai tîrziu pe seama ambi?iei nes?buite a tinere?ii, avînd grij? totu?i s? înl?ture din mintea cititorului imaginea de mic oportunist vulgar, înlocuind-o cu prestan?a tragic? a unui Faust:

Dup? atâtea str?danii zadarnice, acum eram pus pe fapte mari. Aveam dou?zeci ?i opt de ani. Ca s? pot construi ceva în stil mare mi-a? fi vîndut, aidoma lui Faust, ?i sufletul, îmi g?sisem un Mefisto, care nu p?rea mai pu?in acaparator decît cel al lui Goethe.

Acest fel de a aborda evenimentele d? tonul întregii c?r?i. Tot ceea ce poveste?te are rolul de a se pune pe sine în valoare, în antitez? evident? cu imaginile grote?ti sau caricaturale ale celorlal?i. Astfel, Goering se ojeaz?, se fardeaz? ?i poart? bijuterii ostentative, ?i d? dovad? de-un prost gust monumental punînd de-a valma pe pere?i tablourile confiscate de la evrei, iar cînd nu mai are loc le pune pe tavan sau le aga?? de baldachinul patului. Ministrului de externe Ribbentrop i se pare o glum? foarte bun? s? primeasc? de ziua sa o caset? plin? cu tratate negociate de el ?i apoi înc?lcate ?i se laud? cu terenul de vîn?toare f?cut cadou de Stalin. Himmler are ochii mici ?i inexpresivi, Bormann este un ??ran needucat, Goebbels î?i în?al? nevasta în mod grosolan etc.

Este cît se poate de evident c? Speer î?i creeaz?, prin contrast, o imagine rafinat? ?i se simte îndrept??it s?-i dispre?uiasc? pe oamenii politici din anturajul lui Hitler pentru lipsa lor de cultur? ?i de preocup?ri intelectuale, avînd grij? s? precizeze c? lui Hitler îi pl?ceau tocmai pentru c? aveau un „defect de fabrica?ie”: „Treceau drept „defecte de fabrica?ie” s? ai abateri de la moral?, s? ai ni?te îndep?rta?i str?mo?i evrei sau s? fii din categoria celor recent intra?i în partid.” Care era defectul s?u de fabrica?ie, autorul nu ne spune, dar putem specula.

Cît despre Hitler, Speer îi cl?de?te imaginea unui zeu atotputernic ?i capricios, care de?i se complăce adesea în discu?ii triviale gînde?te grandios, de vreme ce aprob? aproape f?r? rezerve planurile arhitectonice ale lui

Speer. Dintre acestea, domul din Berlin (o monstruoasă r?mas? din fericire în proiect), de un kitsch pe care numai Casa poporului îl întrece (din p?cate în fapt), trebuia s? aib? o cupol? cu un diametru de 46 de metri (mai mare decât a Panteonului - 43 m ?i a bazilicii Sfântul Petru - 44 m), sub care se întindeau tribune circulare pe trei rînduri ?i 100 de stîlpi de marmur? de 24 metri în?l?ime, cu „o ni?? înalt? de 50 de metri ?i larg? de 28 al c?rei fundal urma s? fie acoperit cu un mozaic de aur” ?i în fa?a c?reia „se ridica, pe un soclu din marmur? înalt de 14 metri, un vultur imperial aurit, ?inând în gheare crucea încârligat?, încoronat? cu frunze de stejar.” Nu e deci de mirare c? patologic la Hitler autorul nu vede decât credin?a lui nestr?mutat? într-o stea norocoas? care-l va salva de la orice încercare a destinului. Dacă Reichul s-a pr?bu?it, vina a fost a lui Hitler nu pentru c? ideile sale erau gre?ite, ci pentru c? s-a ab?ut în final de la ele:

To?i ne v?zuser?m împin?i spre aceste fapte de sistemul reprezentat tocmai de noi în?ine; împin?i de Hitler care, la rîndul lui, tr?dându-se pe sine, ne tr?dase pe to?i ?i ?i tr?dase poporul. Astfel ?i-a încheiat existen?a cel de-al treilea Reich.

Propriile gre?eli, Speer le trateaz? în general cu indulgen?, le minimizeaz? sau le pune în categoria r?ului mic necesar pentru binele mare. Mai mult, sus?ine sus ?i tare c? a avut informa?ii pu?ine ?i irelevante cu privire la situa?ia din lag?rele de concentrare, dînd vina pe „secretomania sistemului” care „creeaz? grade de ini?iere ?i, deci, îi d? fiec?ruia ocazii de a-?i feri con?tiin?a de contactul cu realitatea inumanului”, ?i pe pozi?ia sa înalt? care, paradoxal, l-ar fi izolat.

Cu toate acestea, înc? de la început recunoa?te c? a tratat cu indiferen?? multe dintre evenimentele care i-au însp?imîntat pe al?ii, ca de exemplu arderea sinagogii din Berlin din 10 noiembrie 1938, care a adus un afront mai curînd sim?ului s?u estetic burghez decât emo?iilor sale: „la priveli?tea oferit? în acea zi de Fasanenstrasse m-a ?ocat, înainte de toate, elementul de dezordine: grinzi carbonizate, p?r?i de fa?ad? pr?bu?ite, ziduri calcinate.... (...) Geamurile sparte ale vitrinelor deranjau, în primul rînd, sim?ul de ordine al burghezului din mine.”

Pe urm?, ca arhitect, Speer a dispus demolarea a numeroase locuin?e evreie?ti, trimi?ându-i pe ace?tia în lag?rele de concentrare. Devenit ministru al armatei, a cerut mîn? de lucru din lag?re pentru fabricarea de armament ?i de?i a vizitat fabricile ?i a v?zut cu ochii lui condi?iile inumane ale de?inu?ilor nu a fost prea impresionat. Mai mult, de?i unul dintre capetele de acuzare de la proces a fost tocmai exploatarea de?inu?ilor, lui Speer nu i se pare c? a procedat diferit fa?? de alte ??ri, în condi?ii de r?zboi ?i c? vina pentru exacerbarea acestei situa?ii în Germania o poart? presa:

Nu-mi contest sentin?a, chiar dac? alte na?iuni fac acum acela?i lucru pe care l-am f?cut noi. Sunt convins c?, în spatele scenei, în timpul discu?iilor despre prizonierii de r?zboi germani, cineva va indica legile privind munca for?at? ?i interpretarea lor ?i urm?rirea penal? de c?tre Tribunalul de la Nürnberg. Ar fi discu?ia pe această chestiune atât de deschis? ?i de critic? în presa noastră, dac? de luni de zile munca for?at? nu ar fi fost denun?at? public ca o crim??...

În acest context, remu?c?rile ?i autoculpabilizarea pe care le profer? din cînd în cînd îi pierd credibilitatea, sunînd mai mult ca ni?te cuvinte înv??ate pe de rost ?i pe care oricum le spune lipsit de convingere: „Chiar ?i ast?zi mai sunt urm?rit de amintirea acelor fotografii, a acelor documente ?i dispozi?ii care p?reau pe cât de monstruoase, pe atât de incredibile...”. Cînd adev?ratul Speer scap? îns? de sub autocenzur?, abia atunci îi dezv?luie candid adev?rata fa??:

Un istoric american a afirmat despre mine c? am iubit mai mult ma?inile dec?t oamenii. Avea dreptate, îmi dau seama c? perceperea suferin?ei oamenilor mi-a influen?at numai sentimentele, nu ?i conduita, în plan afectiv, n-am avut dec?t reac?ii marcate de sentimentalism; la nivelul deciziilor, dimpotriv?, continuau s? m? domine principiile oportunit??ii. Folosirea de?inu?ilor în uzinele de armament avea s?-mi fie repro?at? ?i s? constituie un cap de acuzare împotriva mea la Procesul de la Nürnberg.

M? uit la aceste dou? fotografii ale lui Speer, una din 1933, cealalt? 13 ani mai târziu, din timpul procesului de la Nürnberg ?i constat înc? o dat? c? diavolului i s-a f?cut o mare nedreptate când a fost reprezentat cu coarne, coad? ?i copite. Nu, diavolul e mult mai subtil, are prestan?? în ?inut? ?i blânde?e în privire, ?i un aer dezarmant de onest. Dar mai ales, are diavolul o limb? dulce cu accente atît de veridice, are el un dar de a-?i reinventa trecutul, încît mai-mai ajungi s?-i plîngi tu lui de mil?, mai-mai te convinge c? el e adev?rata victim?.

Alberto says

Unas memorias diferentes que nos muestran a un Adolf Hitler más cercano e incluso íntimo que en nada tiene que ver con el presentado en las grandes obras que lo retratan. Una lectura muy, muy recomendable.

Emily Peery says

A fascinating look into the workings of Hitler's regime--so frustrating to see how disorganized and easy to paralyze, if only one had the right information at the right time. It took a long time to get through, but worth it!

Colin Heaton says

In my many years of interviewing some very high ranking members within the Third Reich, and having read this book many years ago, I know that Speer was not only aware of the Holocaust, he was quite instrumental in directing a large portion of the slave labor program. I have verification from such luminaries as Gen. Adolf Galland, SS-Lt.Gen. Karl Wolff, SS Brig.Gen. Otto Kumm, and Hitler Youth Leader Artur Axmann, etc.

What I do know was that Speer, while not a very willing participant, did try and make the work and living conditions better for the Jews, Poles, Slaves, Ukrainians and others working within the industries under his control, especially after his appointment as Minister of Armaments in 1942, effectively taking over Organization Todt.

The best examples are the V-2 rocket facility at Nordhausen (French Jews), and the Ferdinand Porsche factory (building Tiger I and II tanks) where he ordered the facility directors to increase their caloric intake, provide warmer clothing, and give them better living conditions. This was to maintain a technically

proficient and viable work force, and reducing the death rate.

Speer's memoir is a little self aggrandizing, although his words were corroborated by many others. I give him credit for disobeying Hitler's "vernichtung befehl", the destruction order to blow up major German and European cities, such as Paris, in order to leave a scorched earth program in place.

Missie says

I may have read Albert Speer's memoirs with a cynical eye but to me all I heard were the self centered and egotistical banterings of another one of Hitler's entourage.

Speer says multiple times that Hitler had a magnetic or magical hold over him but only once does he say that he should have looked deeper into who he was blindly following. The German people wised up quicker than Speer. I think that Hitler rubbed Speer's ego so much that he never really cared about anything else. The whole book is about how close he was to Hitler. How he could even defy Hitler's orders and still be in his good graces when no other member of his entourage would consider a smaller slight. In my opinion the few paragraphs, in a book that is over 600 pages long, isn't enough to address Speer's use and knowledge of the concentration camp prisoners and their forced labor!

This book is about one thing - Albert Speer's EGO! This memoir reads like a big pat on the back to himself. Even after his capture he thought the English and the Americans were his fans. I know that our own life experiences help paint our perceptions but for a man who claims that he thought he should share the guilt of the Reich he sure makes a point of avoiding the elephant in the room. To me this book had so much ego behind the words I found it hard to believe - cynic that I am.

Nick Black says

Amazon 2008-08-31. So far as any member of the Reich was "admirable", it was Speer the architect-turned economic minister. I've heard good things about this.

Well Albert Speer certainly was a fantastic Minister of Armaments; good for him, because he'd have likely gone broke if his job were, say, taking an epic personal life and not turning it into 600 pages of scalp-curling tedium. It always seemed that Speer was this enigmatic, Alec Guinness-as-Col. Nicholson-on-the-River-Kwai figure: among but not of the National Socialist higher-ups, a hip member of *jeunesse dorée* caught up among noblesse de robe because he was just that awesome (and willing to utterly overlook National Socialism, of course) -- very much a Hugh Sloan from *All the President's Men*. This is largely due, one realizes immediately, to Shirer having sourced immense amounts of material from Speer, and what is western study of World War II if not rooted in Shirer's (magnificent) *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*? Indeed, through Shirer one's exposed to the majority of what's worth having here. The architecture-obsessed Hitler portrayed at great depth is a different shade of mania than that detailed ad nauseam in any one of the innumerable military analyses, but when the day's done it's still just crazy ol' Adolf, and for any given x you know the function $\text{Adolf}(x)$ yields either "batshit crazy" or "don't care" (to first order). It's not like you're wondering whether, on the next page, Hitler's going to have a Howard Roark-in-the-Fountainhead moment, call back the 8th Panzer Army, have the Jews stop making munitions and instead assist him in building one last great skyscraper, a testament to the supremacy of man. "I may not have made it as a painter, but by Gott the world will know the Gesamtkunstwerk of Adolf Hitler, Architect! Let us dance once more the Thousand-Year Jig, all the way back to that street in Munich!" The very suggestion is asinine, and even if it were true,

the only thing worse than Ayn Rand is perhaps a thinly veiled retelling or ReRanding as they know it at the Objectivist Institute.

It is interesting to watch Speer go from visionary (in terms of at least size and visage, if not actual style) architect to #1 industrial man in the Reich basically because he was eating wurst with Hitler when the old Minister's plane blew up. He rolls with it admirably, brings things under control, improves them tremendously despite the harshest obstacles, and was clearly no man to be fucked with...

...except by a victorious opposing army, hah! Speer got 20 years and deserved every one. He knew what was up, and lets you know he knew, without ever admitting as much. Speer was a cold-hearted son of a bitch apparatchik of the first order.

He did get things *done*, though. You can't hate him.

Priya says

Am euphoric at completing this mammoth book, and my first memoir read. The book does exactly what it claims to do, although one would still be skeptical about Speer's knowledge of the Holocaust. One explanation I can think of in his favor, is that he was simply too bogged down with his own responsibilities and the extreme irrational attitude of the Reich, that when Hanke told him what he had seen at a concentration camp, he simply couldn't get himself befuddled more! Apart from this, there is not even an iota of mention about the Holocaust - it was so surprising that you begin to think they are isolated incidents, but it was happening right there!

But the book gives amazing information. One would think, the regime with its clean uniforms and extreme military decorum would be the classic example of perfection in execution, a well oiled machine, but it just appears so! The amount of confusion and the battle between the corrupt and power hungry sharks shake us and the veil which so beautifully describes Hitler as being this perfect military dictator with panache just breaks into pieces. The guy was stupid and driven more by sentiment than practicality most of the time. And who else could have contributed more to this madness, than Dr.Goebbels. Wonder how he was even classified vaguely as being intelligent!

The Gauliters and the Reichmarshalls had wonderful sounding titles. As the members of the Stauffenberg team(July 20th plot), called these leaders - "nodding donkeys", we all agree. Not even one of them had the integrity or raw courage or faintest impulse to stop Hitler from his irrational decisions. For example, when a general relentlessly tries to explain to Reichmarshall Goering that he indeed has seen an American fighter plane down in the West, Goering simply arm twists him to not only say otherwise, but also believe that such a plane never existed in the German airspace! Under such ridiculous, superficial regime, one would just go mental or end their lives, like they all did.

Sometimes when Speer explains his complete inability to express his crude thoughts about Hitler's decisions, just because of Hitlers overwhelming charisma over Speer, the reader doesn't feel pity. Being so close to the dictator, only increases the chances of trying to make him understand the consequences. Many a times Speer has indeed committed mistakes and in plain language, behaved like a chicken, but he had the guts to accept his faults in the Nuremberg Trial of course when Hitler was no longer alive.At least in this area, as Speer rightly points out, Dr.Goebbels had a better sense of manipulating the Fuhrer, but for all the wrong needs. In my opinion, General Guderian was much more brave than Speer. Guderian screamed at Hitler, with boiling rage that the war was lost, without any inhibitions, so much so, that Hitler was taken aback. Guderian was not in the least favorable or in the inner circle of Hitler even, but Speer was. He had so many things in his

power and stood just a witness to it. Speer displays this really slimy attitude that puts you off. He gulps insults from Hitler and seethes inside.

At the start of the book there are a lot of details which bog you down, regarding the architectural plans and how they were carried out. Speer goes into a very detailed narration, graphs, footnotes etc, but most of the book shows how when the dictator was successful, his so called inner circle loved to be in his favor and even plotted against each other and pulled each other down, but when the regime fell, their insincerity knew no bounds. How, in a single minute, Bormann could completely misrepresent someone who was getting a little too close to the Fuhrer. In this aspect, I would blame Hitler's foolishness than Bormann's cunning.

Also Speer gives us some wonderful insight into the mood of the German people when they cheered for Hitler and how the Fuhrer knew exactly where they were hurt and how he rightly struck the chords using his passionate speeches to get himself elected. A history unimaginable but one which we should all be reminded of again and again. Well, it could happen again, we never know.

To sum it up, started this book in November and it took me quite a while to read, but I enjoyed it. This book is a must read for people who are World War 2 literature enthusiasts. After reading this book, this image of Adolf Hitler as a dictator, and the whole aura or fear vanishes and all you begin to see is a man who was at the core - a plain fool - in fact, a plain cold fool. The book is such a revelation. Am happy I read it.

Here are some of the excerpts which just stick themselves straight in your brain. Loved the writing here. Avoided some spoilers, though they are quite interesting.

1. Albert Speer says "As I see it today, Hitler and Goebbels were in fact molded by the mob itself, guided by its yearnings and its daydreams. Of course, Goebbels and Hitler knew how to penetrate through to the instincts of their audiences; but in the deeper sense they derived their whole existence from these audiences. Certainly the masses roared to the beat set by Hitler's and Goebbels' baton; yet they were not the true conductors. The mob determined the theme. To compensate for misery, insecurity, unemployment, and hopelessness, this anonymous assemblage wallowed for hours at a time in obsessions, savagery and license. The personal unhappiness caused by the breakdown of the economy was replaced by a frenzy that demanded victims. By lashing out at their opponents and villifying the Jews, they gave expression and direction to fierce primal passions."
2. Throughout this trip, frau goebbels proved a pleasant and sensible woman. In general, the wives of the regimes bigwigs resisted the temptation of power far more than their husbands. Eva braun too proved her inner superiority. At any rate she never used for personal ends the power which lay within her grasp.
3. Hitler knew nothing about his enemies and even refused to use the information that was available to him. Instead, he trusted his inspirations, no matter how inherently contradictory they may be and these inspirations were governed by extreme contempt and underestimation of the others.
4. At headquarters, where everyone lived under the tremendous pressure of responsibility, probably nothing was more welcome than a dictate from above. That meant being freed of a decision and simultaneously being provided with an excuse for failure.
5. The communications apparatus at HQ was remarkable....it was possible to communicate directly with all important theaters of the war.....they could be directed from hitlers table in the situation room. The more fearful the situation, the greater was the gulf modern technology created between reality and fantasies with which the man at this table operated.
6. He was often capable of turning to the general staff officers of his entourage and insulting them directly...a good many of the officers who came in for these tongue lashings later joined the july 20 th 1944 conspiracy

against Hitler. In the past Hitler had had a fine sense of discrimination and was able to adapt his language to the people around him. Now he was unrestrained and reckless. The stenographers seemed like envoys from the populace who were condemned to witness the tragedy (Hitler's reckless behavior) from front row seats.

7. Fake horoscopes spoke of valleys of darkness which had to be passed through, foretold imminent surprises, intimated happy outcomes. Only in the astrological sheets did the regime still have a future.

8. Hitler in the situation conference: "We have the good fortune to have a genius in our armaments industry, I mean Saur.

General Thomale put in a tactful word: "Mein Fuhrer, Minister Speer is here".

"Yes, I know", Hitler replied curtly, annoyed at the interruption. "But Saur is the genius who will master the situation".

Oddly enough, I [Albert Speer] swallowed this deliberate insult, almost indifferently.

9. Hitler's dictatorship was the first of an industrial estate in this age of modern technology, a dictatorship which employed to perfection the instruments of technology to dominate its own people. By means of such instruments of technology, eighty million persons could be made subject to the will of one individual. Telephone, teletype, radio, made it possible to transmit the commands of the highest levels directly to the lowest organs where they were executed uncritically.

Siria says

This book is definitely essential reading if you have any kind of interest at all in either WWII, or the agency which individual people can have within a totalitarian system. Inside the Third Reich is a lengthy - in my edition, seven hundred pages, not including notes, bibliography or index - memoir written by Albert Speer, focusing on the years between 1933 and 1945 when he was Hitler's architect, his Minister of Arms and Munitions, and probably one of the closest things Hitler had to a friend.

At many points it's not an easy book to read - not because Speer goes into any detail about the mass killings or the conditions in the concentration camps, but because of the detail which he goes into about the construction and requisition projects which formed so much of his work at the time, the repetitive ways in which he documents tea-time with Hitler. In some ways I think this is one of the most important features of the book. You get to see the sheer banality of the regime, the statistics and demographics which make up such a large chunk of the book showing off the bureaucracy of the Third Reich which was not so very different from many other western countries at the time, or since.

His observations on Hitler's personality, his initial hero-worship for him, and his gradual later disillusionment, are truly fascinating to read about. Hitler is shown, not as a madman or as an evil mastermind, but as an actual person; the descent into delusion and denial in later life is made all the more dramatic by how almost-normal he seemed in the earlier part of the book.

Speer does express regret in the book for the crimes which the Nazi regime committed, and for his part in them. This is not something which he came to realise over the course of writing his memoirs - from the Nuremberg trials, we do have footage of him striking his breast and saying *mea culpa, mea maxima culpa*. Something, perhaps, of a realisation of the wrongs of the regime had already occurred to him from 1944 on, as shown by his attempts to block some or all of the scorched earth policy which Hitler tried to adopt in the last few desperate months of the war.

However, I find it really and truly hard to believe that Speer was ever truly as naive and unaware as he was

presented as being in the book, or that he was devoted to all the aims of Nazism with the exception of its racist ideologies. He certainly wasn't involved directly in any of the mass murder, but he did make use of slave labour in his construction projects and in the munition factories which he ran. He may have been described by others as the 'respectable Nazi'; but respectable or not, he was still a Nazi, who either found the racial policies of the regime acceptable, or capable of being ignored. Perhaps he didn't know; perhaps he didn't want to know, consciously or unconsciously. With an auto-biographical memoir of this nature and on this topic, it is hard to be certain. I think the only thing one can do is to read the book oneself, and make up one's own mind.

Mo says

Fascinating memoir that provides a detailed account of the workings and personalities of the Nazi leadership. Speer's book really brings to life the people behind history's most infamous regime, yet the narrator himself remains at a distance, providing only occasional paragraphs of insight into his own thoughts. He comes across as determinedly apolitical - a laughable aspiration in light of the Nazi government's crimes - focused solely on technology, efficiency, and competence, with eventually some consideration for the welfare of Germany and its people as well. Though Speer accepts responsibility as part of the Nazi leadership, it is difficult to believe that he truly did not know of the Holocaust, after so many years as Hitler's personal friend, after practically running the wartime economy, after rising almost to 'second man in the state,' after benefiting from concentration camp and other forced labor in his own work. Perhaps he simply saw it as not his problem. There is much information about the mechanics and internal processes of Hitler's authoritarian state - and almost no discussion of the actual policies and beliefs of the Nazi party. This makes for a curiously ironic experience for a modern reader, acutely aware of the Holocaust, who knows what is going on in the Nazi state that Speer barely mentions. It is sometimes difficult to integrate this side of the story - the 'Nazi side' of the story - with the accounts of the victims of their violence, which we are far more familiar with. I think Speer could have achieved that integration if he had chosen to address the effects of Nazi policy and of his own work as Minister of Armaments on others as well and it's a shame that he doesn't discuss the moral issues in more detail (why did the appalling treatment of forced laborers or the regime's undermining of democracy never make him question its legitimacy as a whole, for example?). Nevertheless, this is certainly an invaluable historical document and a fairly tense read as well, with its court intrigues set against the backdrop of a war slowly being lost, a state gradually disintegrating.

Jimbo55 says

As an avid reader of many books regarding World War 2, I really enjoyed this. It is a fascinating glimpse into the day to day workings of the Nazi machine . Albert Speers perspective is refreshing as he was not strictly (in his own words) a nazi ideologist, whether this is to be believed or not is up to the reader. But it is the juxtaposition of his apparent detachment from the regimes ideology with a unique access to the people involved that makes this book really interesting in comparison to other first hand accounts that I have read. The tragedy of the holocaust is barely mentioned unfortunately, he seems to avoid the whole subject entirely which is dissappointing considering this book was written years after the full facts were known. His remarkable achievements and pioneering efficiencies as armaments minister no doubt significantly prolonged the war and he never truly explores his own personal culpability to any

great effect.

There is a telling passage in the book where a colleague professes the notion that Speer is probably more comfortable

with machines than he is with humans. The book demonstrates through his successes that he was a man of great intelligence,

a gifted organiser, with a keen analytical and thoroughly logical mind but there is correspondingly less emotional or personal reflection.

At Nuremberg Speer seems to redeem himself by accepting a somewhat defacto responsibility for the events of the war as a member

of the government. He pleads guilty to the charges put forth against him, in his defense I suppose this position differed from many other leaders.

But his reasoning for this unfortunately simply seems to be the best logical conclusion of the same analytic and robotic mind.

A fascinating read.

KOMET says

In 1989, during my Peace Corps service, I came across the book "INSIDE THE THIRD REICH" quite by surprise and could not put it down. I read it for hours nonstop.

The story that Speer relates here of his life and career in the Third Reich, first as Hitler's architect, and later as the Minister for Armaments and War Production (1942-1945) is gripping and compelling. You get a real, tangible sense of what the people (e.g. Goering, Hess, Himmler, Goebbels, Bormann, etc.) were like who played key roles in Nazi Germany.

This memoir does not read like a dry retelling of historical events. You feel yourself a witness to an unfolding drama of deceit, treachery, genocide, and war in the heart of the Third Reich. All of these events may seem incredible as Speer describes them. But they happened, and in reading "INSIDE THE THIRD REICH", you see how it was that Germany was led down the path to destruction by its political leadership.

Rebecca McNutt says

This is not a book for the easily disturbed, but it's vital to not only history, but also to humanity. *Inside the Third Reich* spreads the word loud and clear that the horrors of the Holocaust did happen, that millions were led to their demise because of it, and that we can't let this truth be swept under the carpet if we don't want it to happen again in other forms.

Udeni says

I came to this book via the Amazon TV show "The Man in the High Castle", which is itself based on a Philip K. Dick short story of a world where Germany and Japan won the second world war. Rufus Sewell is the

actor who plays a high-ranking Nazi officer in the TV show. Sewell mentioned in an interview that his sympathetic portrayal of a gradually dehumanised officer is based on Albert Speer. Speer was Hitler's architect and rose through the ranks to become Armaments Minister. So I thought I should read Speer's book to understand a good person could go so badly wrong.

"Inside the Third Reich" is Speer's account of his time inside Hitler's circle from 1938 to 1945. The account is, as Sewell indicates, a convincing explanation of how ordinary people can get seduced by a charismatic and unscrupulous leader. The book shows in great detail how a seductive leader, elected on the promise of restoring national pride, can lead to xenophobia, violence, and war.

The book operates at a number of levels: firstly, it is a fascinating history of the politics and economics of National Socialism; secondly, it is a slightly boring description of armaments production; thirdly, it is a compelling character analysis of Hitler and finally, most uncomfortably, it is Speer's attempt to reconcile his actions with his conscience.

The book is rich in anecdotes: Hitler's rage at Jesse Owen's win at the 1938 Olympics; Hitler's snobbish pride at being courted by the English aristocracy, including a pre-war visit to his Bavarian summer palace from the disgraced Duke and Duchess of Windsor; Hitler's paranoia towards his inner circle who "night after night had to watch trivial operetta movies and listen to endless tirades on Greek temples, the Catholic Church, diet recipes, and police dogs."

I found the most compelling aspect of the book to be Speer's delight in Hitler's patronage, even to the extent that he ignored Germany's descent into barbarism: "On November 10th 1938 I drove past the smouldering ruins of the Berlin synagogues. I accepted what had happened rather indifferently. I felt myself to be Hitler's architect. Political events did not concern me."

After capture and 20 years imprisonment in Spandau prison, Speer felt differently: "I did not know what was really beginning on November 9th 1938, and what ended in Auschwitz and Maidanek. But in the final analysis, I myself determined the extremity of my evasions and the extent of my ignorance." Speer escaped the death penalty at Nuremberg by fully accepting his guilt. "Those who ask me [for explanations] are fundamentally expecting me to offer justifications. But I have none. No apologies are possible."

At over 700 pages, this is not a quick read. But the history is so compelling and the emotions are so raw, I finished the book in a few days. This is essential reading for our times where a demagogue will shortly be in the White House, a dictator already is in the Kremlin, and where nationalism is on the rise throughout Europe.

As Rufus Sewell says about his character in "Man in the High Castle", "The interesting, the horrifying thing about Nazis is they were people. Just ordinary people who managed to find themselves warped."