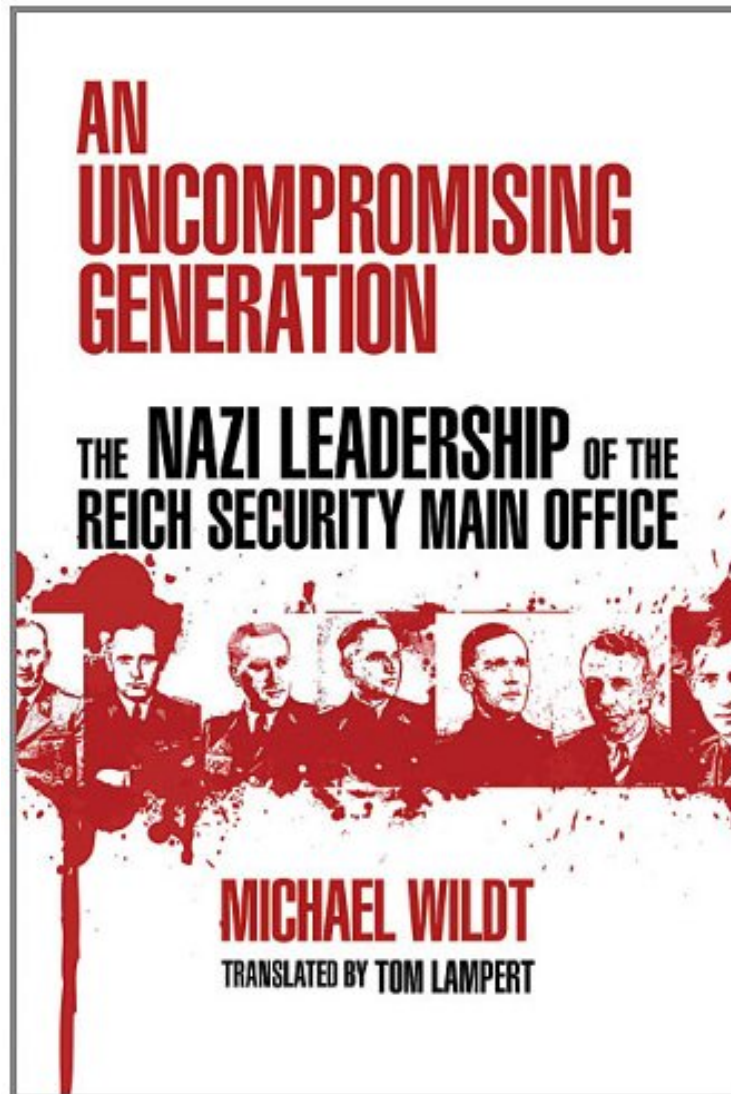


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An Uncompromising Generation: The Nazi Leadership of the Reich Security Main Office (George L. Mosse Series in Modern European Cultural and Intellectual History)

Michael Wildt

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Michael Wildt : An Uncompromising Generation: The Nazi Leadership of the Reich Security Main Office (George L. Mosse Series in Modern European Cultural and Intellectual History) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised An Uncompromising Generation: The Nazi Leadership

of the Reich Security Main Office (George L. Mosse Series in Modern European Cultural and Intellectual History):

0 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Sad. Repugnant people
By Alex Smith
Sad. Repugnant people.
5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Possibly the Best Study of Hitler's Security Forces Ever Written
By Cody Carlson
I don't take the above headline lightly. I have ready dozens of works specifically on the SD, SS, Gestapo, and RSHA, and perhaps hundreds of books on Nazi Germany. A few years ago I attended a lecture by Dr. Charles W. Sydnor, author of "Soldiers of Destruction: The SS Death's Head Division, 1933-1945." It was there that I first heard of Micheal Wildt's "An Uncompromising Generation: The Nazi Leadership of the Reich Security Main Office." Sydnor stated that he thought Wildt's book was unmatched on the subject and so I sought it out. Sydnor was correct. "An Uncompromising Generation" is an absolute brilliant work of history and an unparalleled study of one of the Third Reich's darkest corners. The heart of this work is Wildt's examination of members of the RSHA, Hitler's security apparatus, and his attempt to find commonalities among these men. Wildt notes that most members came from a younger generation than those running other Nazi and German state agencies, many of them too young to have participated in the First World War. Consequently, Wildt argues, they felt as though they had to prove their mettle, upset that they had missed out on the previous generation's great adventure. "The group within the National Socialist leadership primarily responsible for implementing Nazi policies of persecution and extermination was also the youngest," Wildt writes. Most of these men, Wildt writes, were upper middle class men, most with academic credentials, who bought entirely into Hitler's dogma of German racial superiority. As I have stated, I believe this to be the best book on the subject that I have ever read, or likely am ever to read. Wildt's strong academic approach and brilliant conclusions will no doubt shape the way we look at the perpetrators of genocide, though this book really deserves a much wider audience. If you are at all curious about how men could murder on an epic scale with bureaucratic indifference and efficiency, then you will come much closer to your answers by reading Wildt's book.
3 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Good Description of how the SD and later the RSHA worked
By Heimdal
Overall, this was a very good book. It traces the education and careers of several young German academics who joined the SD. I would have given it 5 stars, but the conclusion of the book was very bad in my opinion. The author seems to think that contrary to the verdicts of the Einsatzkommando trials, the de-nazification court judgements, and the laws of the Federal Republic, just the fact that these men served as leaders of Einsatzkommando groups that murdered civilians should get them either life in prison or the death penalty. He never comes out and actually says this, he just makes a comment that that the laws of the Federal Republic were suspended. This smug morally superior attitude makes him equally as guilty as the men he wants eternally punished. In other words, just like the Nazi justice system, the law means nothing if I decide that you are guilty. This does not mean that I am in any way condoning mass murder. I just really dislike academics who exist in theoretical unreal hot houses. One aspect of the academic environment that these individuals lived in that was left out, but would be helpful in understanding how these individuals felt, was the pseudo science of Social Darwinism or Eugenics. This was very popular in the United States and Germany from the late 19th to the mid 20th centuries. This theory basically held that certain groups of people and certain characteristics in a person were undesirable and if these groups were allowed to procreate, the entire population would be harmed. If you were mentally deficient, a habitual criminal, or a repeat truant, the law in 30 states allowed you to be forcibly sterilized. Jews, and Blacks were looked down on as undesirable. This was taught as a real science. In Germany at least, Jews made up a large part of the professions. Many people resented this. It would not be too hard coming from an general antisemitic background combined with a Social Darwinist outlook on the Jews to conclude that they had to be gotten out of Germany. When this proved impossible, based on a radical antisemitic outlook, it would not be hard to be predisposed to killing Jew because of the perceived dire threat that they posed to the German people. .

In *An Uncompromising Generation*, Michael Wildt follows the journey of a strikingly homogenous group of young academics who came from the educated, bourgeois stratum of society as they started to identify with the Nazi concept of *Volksgemeinschaft*, which labeled Jews as enemies of the people and justified their murder. Wildt's study traces the intellectual evolution of key members of the Reich Security Main Office (RSHA) from their days as students until the end of World War II. Established in 1939, this office fused together the Gestapo, the Criminal Police, and the *Sicherheitsdienst* (Security Service) of the SS. Far from being small cogs in a big bureaucratic machine, Wildt finds that the people who made up the RSHA constructed the concepts and operated the apparatus that carried out the Holocaust. At the center of both theory and practice of persecution and genocide in Nazi-occupied Europe, these young men of the RSHA none of whom envisioned the systematic annihilation of the European Jews became radicalized. How this occurred is the central question of Wildt's book. Wildt also discusses the postwar careers of the members of the RSHA. Strikingly, he shows how the leaders of the RSHA evaded the consequences of their actions under the Nazi regime and went on to have important careers in the rebuilt West Germany.

Michael Wildt's examination of the leadership corps of Himmler's Reich Security Main Office . . . is a major work in

every sense. Richard Bessel, *The Times Literary Supplement*