

# The Third Reich: A New History

Michael Burleigh

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# THE THIRD REICH

A NEW HISTORY

"Not merely the most comprehensive one-volume account of the Third Reich in any language but an original work of interpretation in which straightforward narrative history, rigorous analytic explanation and unblinking intellectual-moral judgment are united with compelling originality."

—MICHAEL ANDRÉ BERNSTEIN, LOS ANGELES TIMES BOOK REVIEW

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**Michael Burleigh : The Third Reich: A New History** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Third Reich: A New History:

6 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Great insight on the one-party religious dictatorshipBy Juan-Pablo CaceresThis is not a book of detailed accounts of events, characters, and military success and failure of the Third Reich. It is neither a Hitler-centered overview of his dictatorship. This is a book of insightful interpretation on how the carefully crafted Nazi propaganda replaced religion in Germany to become the one-party regime of those convoluted

1920-30. Michael Burleigh's main thesis is that the upcoming of Nazism can be understood as a spurious religious movement. Nazism carefully design Hitler's image through propaganda, with a whole mythology surrounding him in his messianic role. How this mythology redirected religious fervor is an astonishing account but Burleigh bring it to life with his great insights. The book is not an easy read, so is not for people that want a fast introduction to Nazi Germany. It is, however, a very well documented and written analysis. The main facts are only mentioned and the reader is expected to know them, this is not why this book is called a "New History". His interpretation is what makes the book a worthy (New History) read for anyone that wants more in-depth analysis of those year. I gave the book 4 stars only because Burleigh abuses the negative adjectives (evil, insane, atrocious, etc...) which I think is totally unnecessary giving the context and expecting smart and informed readers (what's the point of ending a sentence or a paragraph of massive murder in the Eastern Front with those words, isn't it obvious enough?). 67 of 72 people found the following review helpful. What nazism actually meant to the world. By John Barry Kenyon Michael Burleigh has written a most scholarly, and yet richly readable, new history of the Third Reich. It is "new" in the sense that he combines a theoretical approach - nazism as a pseudo religious force in its mass appeal inside and outside Germany - with abundant material on the lives of everyday people. His chapter headings are thematic, rather than strictly chronological, and include sub sections such as "See You In Siberia" and "The Generals Who Dithered". The nazi attempts to dominate and exploit the economic life of Europe and beyond are particularly well discussed. The volume is a useful contrast with Ian Kershaw's recent, excellent biography of Hitler since Burleigh has written a more international account: his particular remit is to analyse the impact of nazism as a huge political force across frontiers. He is impressively adroit in tracing the pro and anti nazi sentiment in eastern Europe and Russia. There is, for instance, some fascinating insight into the Tatars of the Ukraine who were deported by Stalin's police in cattle truck journeys lasting up to three months. The author's final chapter covers the years 1943 to 1948 where it is explained that denazification had a short life from 1945 since the allies and the Russians soon had much greater global problems to address. There are a few slips in the text, for example the main Nuremberg war criminals were not hanged "at dawn" (page 804), and this reviewer felt that nazi and anti nazi media propaganda could tell us more of the international dimension than is revealed in the book. None the less, this is an insightful tome, full of sound judgments and interesting sidelights on virtually every page. Just for the record, Burleigh has no truck with revisionist sentiments about the personalities and policies of the Reich. Here is the story of a criminal gang who brought Europe to its knees. 15 of 18 people found the following review helpful. Brilliant analysis flawed by poor editing By Bill Stevenson Burleigh's historical overview of the Third Reich is a remarkable work in many ways. The author's undoubted scholarship and attention to detail are impressive. The book reads like a series of lectures presented by a brilliant historian. The bibliography alone is worth the price of the book. I did not see a totally new interpretation, but Burleigh does put together a more complete picture of the Third Reich than is available in any other single volume. The picture is necessarily complex and the treatment given does the subject justice. The book has a strong bias, but what book on the Third Reich lacks one? Unfortunately, as other reviewers have correctly pointed out, the book does not read well. Geared to impress an academic audience, Burleigh's writing style is arcane. The book cries out for a good edit. My wife, a college professor herself, said she would grade the book "A" for content, and "F" for writing style and said that it is very typical of PhD types who are trying to impress. Spare us Dr. Burleigh, you do not need to work so hard to impress, your scholarship and your research speak loudly enough. Write for the wider audience that needs to read and understand this important book. For the reader willing to sit with a good, comprehensive dictionary in hand, wading through this book is worth the effort because the insight gleaned does prove valuable. For those not so inclined, this latest effort at a solid, single volume history of the Third Reich falls short. We are still waiting for that book to be written.

A Major Study of One of the Twentieth Century's Darkest Periods Until now there has been no up-to-date, one-volume, international history of Nazi Germany, despite its being among the most studied phenomena of our time. The Third Reich restores a broad perspective and intellectual unity to issues that have become academic subspecialties and offers a brilliant new interpretation of Hitler's evil rule. Filled with human and moral considerations that are missing from theoretical accounts, Michael Burleigh's book gives full weight to the experience of ordinary people who were swept up in, or repelled by, Hitler's movement and emphasizes international themes—for Nazi Germany appealed to many European nations, and its wartime conduct included efforts to dominate the Continental economy and involved gigantic population transfers and exterminations, recruitment of foreign labor, and multinational armies.

.com Humans have a fascination with evil. We long to identify it, quantify it, and understand it. To this end, newspapers frequently splash photographs of murderers with the caption "The face of evil." Heading most lists of the 20th century's most evil people would be Adolf Hitler, but, as Michael Burleigh's tour de force makes clear, evil is not always as cut-and-dried as we would like. The Nazis could not have come to power and committed Germany to a policy of war and genocide without the tacit consent of the German people. This makes Germany as a whole responsible for the crimes committed in its name, but it is clearly wrong to label every German as evil. Through his

painstaking research and direct prose, Burleigh slowly builds up a picture of a people desperate for identity and economic prosperity, who, bit by bit, closed off their conscience as the price of their dreams. There was no one cathartic moment when Germany, under the Third Reich, lapsed from goodness into badness; rather, there was an incremental realignment of a collective morality. Burleigh's explanation of this phenomenon is so simple, yet so obviously right, that you can only wonder that it didn't become the generally accepted currency years ago. Instead of viewing Nazi Germany in purely social, political, and economic terms--though he doesn't ignore these spheres--Burleigh wraps them all into a picture of a country gripped in a religious, messianic fervor, and that which had previously felt inexplicable suddenly seems clear. If you want the nitty-gritty details of the Second World War and the genocide, they are here, retold as well as, if not better than, many of the other histories of this period. But it's Burleigh's take on the people of Germany that makes this book so special. Above all, with similar genocidal wars currently being fought in Kosovo, Rwanda, and Iraq, it makes you think, "Would I be able to resist becoming complicit in such regimes?" This is a must for every 20th-century historian. --John Crace, .co.uk

From Publishers Weekly  
After literally thousands of books have been written on the Nazis and their history, the author who attempts another one has to have a compelling reason. Burleigh, professor of history at Washington and Lee University and author of several books on Germany, focuses on the moral breakdown that gave Hitler control of an industrial society, which then, along with the rest of the world, suffered the catastrophic consequences. Though the topic is not new, the treatment is first-rate, making this indeed a new history. For example, as he does elsewhere, in the case of the Roehm purge, he omits many of the well-known details in order to explain its significance with clarity and even verve. Burleigh treats Christian opponents of Hitler with more kindness than they usually receive, and his treatment of anti-Semitism as something quite minor in the lives of most Germans of the period will no doubt stir up controversy, as will his unusual emphasis on non-Jewish victims of the Nazis. The author emphasizes the perspectives of individuals who lived through these events, giving his book a democratic flavor uncommon since William L. Shirer's famous history. But the primary value of Burleigh's book lies in its overview of the interpretations made by others. However, the book is not without flaws: Burleigh's prejudices toward conservatives lead him to write of the feckless German officers as more heroic than they were and to sneer at the left-wing opponents of the Nazi regime who suffered far more in their struggle. And his writing is sometimes too clever. His reference to the sadistic and murderous Franz Alfred Six as a "1968er avant la lettre" is an example of both flaws at once. Such lapses are minor annoyances, though. Burleigh has produced an important work of synthesis that recapitulates an impressive array of sources. It deserves to become the jumping-off point for scholars who want to take their studies of this uniquely horrible era in new directions. Illus. not seen by PW. (Oct.) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

From Library Journal  
Burleigh (Washington and Lee Univ.) has written a masterly narrative of how Nazi racial, political, and economic ideology was applied in Germany and in those territories conquered by the Third Reich. The result is a book that reveals the complexity of daily life under Nazism. Burleigh's greatest strength is in avoiding facile generalizations about such controversial topics as whether the Christian churches supported or opposed Nazism. In addition, he prevents the text from devolving into historiographical controversies, such as the functionalists vs. structuralist debate. Burleigh is at his best when analyzing the structure of Nazi ideology and its implementation, and as such his chapter on the postwar world is probably the weakest. Furthermore, although he introduces many interesting and sometimes sympathetic characters, the reader is sometimes left wondering about their fate. Nevertheless, this book should become one of the standard volumes on the history of the Third Reich. Recommended for all libraries. D  
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