



The Devil's Diary: Hitler's High Priest and the Hunt for the Lost Papers of the Third Reich

Robert K. Wittman, David Kinney

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This exploration of the private wartime diary of Alfred Rosenberg—Hitler’s “chief philosopher” and architect of Nazi ideology—interweaves the story of its recent discovery with the revelation of its never-before-published contents, which are contextualized by the authors: The result is a unprecedented, page-turning narrative of the Nazi rise to power, the Holocaust, and Hitler’s post-invasion plans for Russia

A groundbreaking historical contribution, *The Devil's Diary* is a chilling window into the mind of Adolf Hitler’s “chief social philosopher,” Alfred Rosenberg, who formulated some of the guiding principles behind the Third Reich’s genocidal crusade. It also chronicles the thrilling detective hunt for the diary, which disappeared after the Nuremberg Trials and remained lost for almost three quarters of a century, until Robert Wittman, a former FBI special agent who founded the Bureau’s Art Crimes Team, traced its strange journey.

The authors expertly and deftly contextualize more than 400 pages of entries stretching from 1936 through 1944, in which the loyal Hitler advisor recounts internal meetings with the Führer and his close associates Hermann Göring and Heinrich Himmler; describes the post-invasion occupation of the Soviet Union; considers the “solution” to the “Jewish question;” and discusses his overseeing of the mass seizure and cataloguing of books and artwork from homes, libraries, and museums across occupied Europe. An eyewitness to events, this narrative of Rosenberg’s diary offers provocative and intimate insights into pivotal moments in the war and the notorious Nazi who laid the philosophical foundations of the Third Reich.

The Devil's Diary: Hitler's High Priest and the Hunt for the Lost Papers of the Third Reich Details

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From Reader Review The Devil's Diary: Hitler's High Priest and the Hunt for the Lost Papers of the Third Reich for online ebook

Carlos says

This was such a good book, it's fast paced and very detailed , in it you will find the philosophy that paved the way for the Nazis to rise to power and the one that was used to try to brainwash a whole nation into committing the worst crimes in recorded human history, because of it 60 million people would lie dead at the end of the Second World War, 6 million Jews among them, who was the creator of that philosophy, in this book you'll meet him (Rosenberg) , and you'll see how he was able to influence the key players of the Nazi party into applying his philosophy, even Hitler himself . This book is highly detailed and it goes from book looting , art theft , the Nazi rise to power and their downfall , to the Nuremberg trials and its aftermath. The diary of Rosenberg which is the main point of this book is the catalyst to go into detail for all the matters mentioned above. It was a very informative book in a great format which made it easy to read and digest .

Dee Halzack says

Fascinating history of the Nazis set within the framework of the diary of a key ideological figure.

I was attracted to it thinking it might help to explain how the Nazis managed to be so successful, in order to avoid a repeat. The Nazis resorted to a lot of thuggery in the beginning. And a failed attempt at taking over in the 20's was not addressed effectively enough.

The big parallel with today is the hate speech. Some of the Nazis apparently really believed that all Jews were communists and were bent on taking over the world and thus that getting rid of the Jews was a matter of national security. Not that the followers of a certain politician believe all immigrants are terrorists (maybe just those from a certain part of the world); but I think many of them do believe that being against immigrants is a matter of national security.

Slippery slope that led to Nazis taking over in Germany has also been followed here: suspension or cancellation of civil rights in the name of national security. Convincing me even more that Edward Snowden was right to wake us up to the Big Brother state.

So it was a little disappointing in answering the reason I selected it, but nevertheless fascinating.

Ellen says

Important reading, not only to understand the the Nazi hatred & atrocities, but the significance of propaganda & brainwashing on an entire nation. Sadly, it seems to me that in the US now we are experiencing this brainwashing toward Muslims.

Jimmy says

A few years ago I read a really good book titled Hitler's Philosophers by Yvonne Sherratt. The book mentioned Alfred Rosenberg as one of the Nazi's influential ideologue and so when I found this book in the library I felt I had to pick it up to know more about this Rosenberg. The book is about the diary of Rosenberg and I was expecting it to focus mainly on the contents within Rosenberg's diary. To be frank I was disappointed with my expectations but I couldn't totally dismissed the entirety of the book either because it was an interesting subject.

The beginning portion of the book gives us an interesting tale of the history of Rosenberg's diary after the war was over. It was in the Allies hands and then handed to a prosecutor who kept it as a personal possession among other important documents. After the individual died there is a tale of legal battles for the materials to be handed to scholars for studies but unfortunately the diary was stolen by an eccentric liberal theologian and publishers of odd books. It's the story of how a holocaust archivist and a former FBI detective specializing in stolen historical artifacts and relics pursued the case of getting the diary back. Because the story was so interesting one can readily forgive the author for writing at such lengths of the account of what happened. However since I was expecting the second portion of the book to be an analysis of the diary I did feel disappointed that this wasn't going to be a book on the diary. Instead the rest of the book was a thriller of sorts that covered two men during the rise of the Nazis and afterwards: First is of course the story of Rosenberg and the second is the story of German Jew named Robert Kempner. In a way Kempner was a foil in the book for Rosenberg for while Rosenberg was part of the Nazis' in-crowd and involved with the Nazi's internal politics, Kempner was ostracized and eventually he fled Nazi Germany, came to America and after the war was involved with the prosecution of Nazi war criminals. The book provided a fascinating look at the personalities of both individuals and those around them (other Nazis, the wife of Kempner and his mistresses, etc). Although I was disappointed that the book wasn't about the contents of the diary as its main focus I did appreciate this for the stories that's told and personally for me to understand a little bit more about Rosenberg. One take away point I got from the book is the fact that Rosenberg's political battles with other Nazis reveal that every organization no matter how ideological has its politics. Without downplaying Rosenberg's evil I think I also learned from the book also his limitations of merely being an idealist in the world of Nazi politics and petty jealousies. Rosenberg was definitely an evil man and his attempt to shore up pseudo-intellectual support makes it all the more wicked.

Susie James says

"The Devil's Diary" version I won via Goodreads was in the form of an uncorrected proof and didn't actually come with the subtitling of "Hitler's High Priest and the Hunt for the Lost Papers of the Third Reich" -- the subtitling was instead, "Alfred Rosenberg and the Stolen Secrets of the Third Reich". No matter. This history and mystery doesn't answer all the questions it nudges into the reader's mind all these decades after the Rosenberg diary went missing, or after the formation of the Nazis, which occurred many years before the United States got actively involved in the Second World War (for which Rosenberg, as the authors Robert K. Wittman and David Kinney note, blamed the higher echelon Jews). Just imagine all the mythology Rosenberg, Hitler and others who held the German peoples in thrall for so long under the pretext of Nationalism, sucked into their brains and spewed out upon the world for so very long! THE AUTHORS inject some sly wit from time to time in this history book, amazingly, considering the horrific grimness of the subject matter. Rosenberg was hanged, Goebbels and others, including Hitler and his spouse, Eva Braun, suicides in the months following the end of the war and the revelation of the death camps. Robert Kempner, who was fired by one Nazi bureaucrat years before Kempner fled to the United States, finagles his way onto

the prosecutorial team during the trials at Nuremberg and helps send many war criminals either to prison or to suicide or to the hangman. Wittman, who first searches for treasures stolen from their many victims by the Nazis as part of a special FBI team, later gets into the action seeking Rosenberg's diary, which was handed over in 2013 and is now in the Holocaust Museum. Rosenberg -- his words from the diary and from material amassed while he was awaiting trial and on trial as a war criminal are among the examples of an incredible, unbelievable string of observations and philosophies leading to mass brutalities -- and others around Hitler espoused pity or sympathy for their uniformed murderers taking part in killing thousands of innocents -- all the expending of bullets, led to the creation of less hands-on methods, such as gas chambers disguised as showers or vans. This book is recommended.

Lynn says

Today's post is on The Devil's Diary: Hitler's High Priest and the Hunt for the Lost Papers of the Third Reich by Robert K. Wittman and David Kinney. It is 416 pages long and including notes; it is published by HarperCollins. The cover has a picture of Alfred Rosenberg with this diary in front of his face. The intended reader is someone who is interested in history, World War 2 and understanding how things happen. There is some foul language, no sex, and violence in this book. There Be Spoilers Ahead.

From the back of the book- This exploration of the private wartime diary of Alfred Rosenberg—Hitler’s “chief philosopher” and architect of Nazi ideology—interweaves the story of its recent discovery with the revelation of its never-before-published contents, which are contextualized by the authors: The result is a unprecedented, page-turning narrative of the Nazi rise to power, the Holocaust, and Hitler’s post-invasion plans for Russia

A groundbreaking historical contribution, The Devil’s Diary is a chilling window into the mind of Adolf Hitler’s “chief social philosopher,” Alfred Rosenberg, who formulated some of the guiding principles behind the Third Reich’s genocidal crusade. It also chronicles the thrilling detective hunt for the diary, which disappeared after the Nuremberg Trials and remained lost for almost three quarters of a century, until Robert Wittman, a former FBI special agent who founded the Bureau’s Art Crimes Team, traced its strange journey. The authors expertly and deftly contextualize more than 400 pages of entries stretching from 1936 through 1944, in which the loyal Hitler advisor recounts internal meetings with the Führer and his close associates Hermann Göring and Heinrich Himmler; describes the post-invasion occupation of the Soviet Union; considers the “solution” to the “Jewish question;” and discusses his overseeing of the mass seizure and cataloguing of books and artwork from homes, libraries, and museums across occupied Europe. An eyewitness to events, this narrative of Rosenberg’s diary offers provocative and intimate insights into pivotal moments in the war and the notorious Nazi who laid the philosophical foundations of the Third Reich.

Review- This book is not just about Rosenberg but about the lawyer who helped try him. The lawyer was a Jewish man named Kempler and at the end of the Nuremberg trials, he walked away with thousands of documents about Rosenberg and the Nazi crimes. He was going to write a book about it but that just never happened. So many papers and documents were thought to be lost to time when they were found by Kempler's sons after he died. But some of the book is about Rosenberg and the excellent written documents he left behind about himself, the Führer, and the Nazi plans in general. It is very chilling to read the words yourself about what Rosenberg and others high up in the Nazi party thought about anyone who was Jewish or just not pure 'Aryan'. With the recovery of this diary we can again examine how the Nazis happened and what we can do to stop it from happening again.

I give this book Five out of Five stars. I was given a copy of this book by HarperCollins in exchange for an honest review.

Jana says

The Devil's Diary begins with the search for (and, within a mere 61 pages, the recovery of) the diary of Alfred Rosenberg, a top-level member of Adolf Hitler's Third Reich and one of the principal masterminds behind the horrors of the second World War. One of the consulting prosecutors at the Nuremberg Trials, Robert Kempner, managed to get his hands on the entirety of Rosenberg's handwritten pages and squirreled them away in his home, along with countless other documents and mementos. Because the diary had been long-fabled but never seen, and Robert Wittman only became aware of its existence after Kempner's death, no direct insight is provided into why Kempner hoarded these items and what purpose he might have intended for them, which is a shame.

The bulk of The Devil's Diary actually contains two sections covering Rosenberg's activities during the years 1918-1946: his rise to power within Hitler's circle of allies and informants, his implementation of long-winded and wholly inaccurate "philosophies" and "histories" supporting Hitler's and his own hatred of Jews and other peoples, and his effect (and lack thereof) on various policies as they were enacted across Europe and Russia. Rather than simply reprinting his diary, Wittner and David Kinney provide a thoroughly researched historical backdrop of those tumultuous and terrible years and provide context via liberal use of quotes from Rosenberg's writings, both personal and public. There are also chapters following Kempner in those years as he first fled Germany for Italy, then France, then America; then, after the war ended, his attempts to participate in the trials of the men who had authorized genocide against his people.

The writing style from the first section to the second and third is markedly different; the first is overly dramatic and colorful, as though the writer didn't trust the reader to grasp the very real drama and gravity of the FBI's search for the diary. If you've ever seen an episode of *Unsolved Mysteries* (particularly as hosted by Robert Stack), you'll know why it was too easy for me to imagine his sonorous voice reading sentences like, "The verdicts were the culmination of Kempner's long campaign against the Nazi party," immediately followed up by, "Or at least, they should have been." Luckily, the second and third sections are far more restrained and straightforward, allowing the actions of men like Rosenberg and Joseph Goebbels to take center stage and, quite appropriately, horrify the reader with their casual attitudes regarding wholesale slaughter of human beings and outright theft of their treasured belongings. The third section even provides extensive information about the Third Reich's attempted conquest of portions of the Soviet Union, an element of history that is sometimes overlooked in favor of the Nazis' heinous deeds closer to home.

The trade-off, sadly, is that The Devil's Diary talks mostly of the subjugation and murder of Jews and Communists, but neglects to fully examine the attempts to eradicate Romani, ethnic Poles, homosexuals, and many other nominally deviant members of European society. Euthanasia and sterilization of infirm and disabled persons is touched on, as well as the efforts to round up and execute elderly people, but as Rosenberg doesn't seem to have written much about any of the above programs, neither are they given much page-time here. I didn't expect this to be a completely comprehensive approach to every evil the Nazis perpetrated, but as the groups I just listed no more matched the vision of so-called "Aryan perfection" than Jews or Communists, I would have liked to see some greater level of respect and attention paid to them as well.

I would recommend this book primarily to people who are interested in the European theater of World War

Two, as well as to people who are curious about the contemporaries and cronies who influenced Hitler and helped him maintain power throughout a dark period of human history. The Devil's Diary is a valuable resource, and Wittman and Kinney do an excellent job of contextualizing history for modern readers.

I received a free copy of this book from the publisher in exchange for an honest, unbiased review. Review cross-posted at Amazon.

Jill Hutchinson says

Although the title is a bit misleading, it doesn't dilute the contents of the book. Only the first 61 pages are devoted to the search for and discovery of Alfred Rosenberg's diary....the remainder of the book is dedicated to the years that Hitler was in power and the influence that Rosenberg had in developing the ideology of the Nazi party. The story also concentrates on Robert Kempner, who as a lower level prosecutor at the Nuremberg trials had access to Rosenberg's writings as well as other important Nazi documents.....and took possession of them after the trials ("stole them" would probably be a more appropriate term). They were hidden in his home until the Holocaust Museum finally traced them down and they now have become a part of the library for study at the Museum.

Albert Rosenberg was an early friend of Adolf Hitler and was basically a man who never had an original thought. When he wrote *The Myth of the Twentieth Century* on which the Nazi theories were based, he plagiarized everything he could find that supported his anti-Semitism. It appealed to Hitler and the Nazi party accepted Rosenberg's work as a base to begin to build power. Rosenberg had great influence with Hitler in the beginning of the Nazi rise to power and was appointed to high office. But his reputation soon paled as he began having to deal with smarter (although equally evil) men in the hierarchy and became almost a by-stander by the time Hitler started land grabbing. He continued to speak virulently against the Jews and was obviously aware of and somewhat involved in the "final solution" although he was no longer a major player.

Although the information in this book is not particularly new to the student of German WWII history, the author succeeds in holding the interest of the reader. Well written and worth finding.

Don says

The story behind this story is just as fascinating as the main topic of the book. A German Jewish lawyer by the name of Robert Kempner attempted to prosecute Adolf Hitler for high treason and to ban the Nazi party back in 1928. Once the Nazis took power he was expelled from Germany. He moved to America with his wife and mistress (where they maintain a permanent, though secret polygamous relationship. After the war he returned to Germany as an anti-Nazi legal expert who assisted with the Nuremberg trials. It was during this time that Kempner stole most of the diary belonging to Alfred Rosenberg, Hitler's philosopher of Nazism. The diary remained lost until 20 years after Kempner's death in 1993.

Since its recovery, the author of this book has used it and other sources to tell the story of Rosenberg. Not as well known now as Hitler's other evil cronies, Rosenberg still played an important role in the rise of the Nazis, especially during the early years. In latter years he was sidelined by Goebbels and Borman, but was culpable enough that he was hanged at Nuremberg.

Rosenberg codified the Nazi hatred for the Jews. He and Hitler had plans to also suppress Christianity had the Nazis prevailed in the war.

Joel says

I received this book for free through Goodreads Giveaways and this is my unbiased review.

This review may give some details about the contents of the book, but given that it is a non-fiction about the Nazi's and WWII I am reluctant to label anything here a spoiler. That being said I may reveal some details some readers may not want to know before reading.

This book tells the story of the formation and rise of the Nazi party, the events of WWII, and its aftermath for the leaders of the movement through the experiences of two people.

Alfred Rosenberg was there at the beginning for the Nazis. He was in charge when Hitler went to jail and later named the chief philosopher of the Third Reich, helping to form the ideas of how to cleanse Europe for the pure Aryan race.

Robert Kempner was a Jew who worked in the German government after WWI. Forced out of his job, his country, and eventually his continent by the Nazis, he returned after the war as a part of the American prosecution team in the Nuremberg Trials. He also stole many boxes of captured Nazi documents from the trials, including Rosenberg's diary, which were kept from the public and posterity until they were recovered in 2013.

The revelations in the diary are reflected in this book and add to the overall understanding of how those at the top of the Nazi hierarchy operated.

This book begins with the story of how Kempner obtained the diary and other documents and how they were recovered. It's a neat little detective story.

The rest of the book covers the lives of both Kempner and Rosenberg, telling the entire arc of the Nazi party's formation, rise, and fall. The bits of story regarding Kempner felt a little off for me. Maybe it was an attempt to tell how the Nazi's policies affected this individual, or maybe just remind the reader that Kempner still existed and he would arrive back in the story at the end. Kempner himself isn't the most likable character, at times seeming more concerned with saving himself and improving his own lot in life than others.

This was the first book I've read about the Nazi's and WWII. I've seen documentaries and learned about it in school, but nothing this in-depth. It tells very little of the battles fought in the war, but much of the fights in the administration of the Third Reich and the battles of personality in those looking for personal power and to be in the good favor of the Führer.

An enlightening read recommended for anyone less interested in the military aspect of Nazism and the Third Reich and more desiring to learn about the rest.

Judy G says

I have read much about Nazi Germany and it is a specialty for me first as a Jew second as a person concerned about the human condition. With each of these books (last read was KL history of the concentration camps) I learn about another dimension of this era and those people. The thirst for power and the depravity and the lack of conscience and boundaries. someone should write about the Nazi women as most of what I read is on the male supremacy ideal.

What I noted with this book was the reason for its existence (Nazi existence) was a world of the Aryan race pure and unaffected by any others. Their plan was to destroy everyone and everything that didnt fit into that mad view.

Rosenberg was considered by Hitler as the idealogue and he absolutely hated the jewish people and that was in agreement with Hitler while he helped to build that as their platform with everything coming from that and therefore the plans to solve the "jewish question" by killing us all. In this book the authors include parts of the Rosenberg Diary which was only recently discovered. So the book is about Rosenberg as it is about the Nazi segment of world history and the other criminal Nazis. It is also about Robert Kempner who got hold of the Diary and tried to keep it and maybe he sold it.

It is a rich book...

Andy says

In his last book Robert Wittman produced an amazing page turner and I was super looking forward to his new book. However once the first section of the book is done telling the interesting tale of how the US Holocaust Museum tracked down a legendary diary of the 'intellectual' leader of the Nazi party the book kinda falls into a typical retelling of the war. This could be due to me reading so much on the subject but it does not bring much new to the tale.

As for Alfred Rosenberg he is yet another simpleton with a world view that is so out of time that it remains amazing to me that the Nazis were able to come to power in the first place.

Indr? says

According to the title "The Devil's Diary" I expected something like "Dear diary, Fuhrer said/did this or that today", but honestly, there were probably just few actual quotes from Rosenberg's diary in the whole book. Majority of the book was brief history of Third Reich's glory and downfall. Very superficial I would say, because I already knew more than I've read in this book. I expected to read more about personal stuff and what they were really thinking as human beings, not what we already know: malicious destructive ideas which caused the worst war on Earth... so far...

I just didn't know that they used cars to grab and kill people using those cars' gas system. This is a new fact for me. And I wasn't so pleased to read that Lithuanians were more than happy to help nazis to kill people in the name of "pure nation". That was wrong.

In general, according to the cover this books looks like a diary of Alfred Rosenberg about Hitler and Third Reich, but 1/3 of the book was about Robert Kempner. What???? Ok, he found Rosenberg's diary, but I wasn't interested in his life and his multiple love affairs. Well of course, he was fighting against that evil and

this deserves respect, but this book wasn't supposed to be about him.
I gave it 3 stars only because I like history books in general.

Πα?λος says

Μια εξαιρετικ? μελ?τη για τον ?νθρωπο που απο?λεσε τον ακρογωνια?ο λ?θο της ναζιστικης φιλοσοφ?ας. Μ?σα απο τα ημερολ?για και τα ?γγραφα που βρ?θηκαν κρυμμ?να σε ?να κ?στρο κ?που στην γερμανικ? ενδοχ?ρα, φανερ?νεται η θεωρητικ? β?ση της ναζιστικης φιλοσοφ?ας αλλ? και το προφ?λ εν?ς ανθρ?που που ως τωρα παρ?μενε καλ? κρυμμ?νο.

Robert LoCicero says

Quite fascinating look at the philosopher of the Nazi party and Reichminister for the Eastern Territories during World War II when Hitler and his killers ruled Europe. The lead author has been involved in recovery of cultural artifacts in his work with the FBI and the volume arose out of the discovery of the diary of Alfred Rosenberg in the early years of the 21st Century. This Nazi and his history of work during the Third Reich is the heart of the book as well as the parallel story of Robert Kempner, an emigre from Nazi Germany who while doing civic work within Germany, opposed the Hitlerites. Kempner proved to be very adept at making himself useful to various individuals and led a stimulating though bizarre life. He was Jewish so his life in Germany always hinged on a knife edge. He did make good finally and the later half of the book moves to discussion of the Nazi Gotterdamerung at the post-war trials at Nuremberg. All the surviving characters of Nazi Germany are discussed with particular attention to Goring and Rosenberg. The trial discussions make for fascinating reading and present new information as do the scores of quotes from the newly revealed diary of Rosenberg. In the heated political climate of today's US election campaign it certainly behooves everyone to actually read and study what the Nazi machine did to the world in World War II and then consider whether quick insults and referrals of Nazi-like behavior involving Donald Trump are appropriate. Read your history, check out the diary quotes and then honestly cogitate on the horror of these Nazi monsters. You will have your eyes opened and fully opened for sure.
