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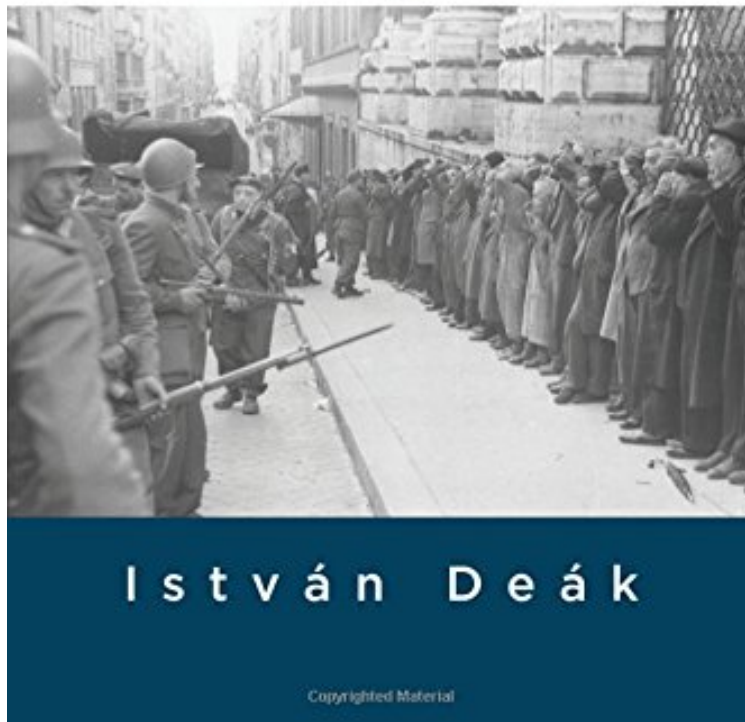
Istvan Deak

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EUROPE ON TRIAL

*The Story of Collaboration, Resistance, and
Retribution During World War II*



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Istvan Deak : Europe on Trial: The Story of Collaboration, Resistance, and Retribution during World War II before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Europe on Trial: The Story of Collaboration, Resistance, and Retribution during World War II:

20 of 20 people found the following review helpful. A work that is at once erudite and personalBy George

DeakDisclosure: I am not related to Istvan Deak, though I share his surname (it being quite a common Hungarian and, in both of our cases, Jewish-Hungarian name). I was also a student of his long ago (in the 1970s) at Columbia University. Although I did not follow Professor Deak into the profession of history, I have followed his publications and scintillating book reviews in the New York Review of Books, The New Republic and other journals. Istvan Deak is a master historian. He brings a lifetime of study and teaching experience to explore some problems of World War II history that he has been considering since his own traumatic coming of age in wartime Budapest. Thus, the book is at once erudite and personal. The moral judgments, one feels, are hinged on the question of what would he have done in the position of the actors under study, or, in hindsight, what could and should have been done. One is reminded of the many cases in which simple human compassion was missing, but also of odd cases in which it was displayed where least expected, as in Denmark, where all Danish Jews were allowed to escape to Sweden with the connivance of German occupiers. The book presents three complexly interrelated modes of behavior that the war and its aftermath elicited from Europeans: collaboration and resistance during the war, and retribution as it ended. As Deak points out, these were not exhaustive or exclusive. Most people in fact, just tried to survive and accommodate themselves to the situation. Then there were the most severely targeted victims, such as the Jews and Poles, who in most cases were unable to choose collaboration or even accommodation, and chose resistance (in my opinion) perhaps too rarely. But the fate and actions of these victims is covered in many other works. The originality of this work is its exploration of the temporal trajectories and interactions, motivations, ironies, inhumanities and often moral dilemmas of the three other modes that appear in its title. The coverage is broad but balanced. All of Nazi-occupied and Nazi-allied Europe is surveyed and one gets a sense of the different possibilities, dilemmas, and relative intensities of conflict faced in each country. Even the collaboration of neutral Spain in the war against the Soviet Union is mentioned, making this reader want to learn more. In considering collaboration, the ambiguities are many. Was a Dane or a Czech who worked in an industry that served the German war effort a collaborator? As Deak points out, people often had more choices than they allowed themselves to make. Or could Marshal Petain, head of government of Vichy France, legitimately claim, as he did at his trial, that he shielded France from a harsher German occupation? Probably not! For, as we learn, Petain's France took anti-Jewish measures in anticipation of German requests. Collaborators generally had self-seeking goals of their own. As for the resistance, were attacks on German targets always worth their costs? After Mussolini's dismissal but while there were still Germans in Rome, the Italian resisters exploded a device in a narrow street through which a column of German soldiers passed every day. Thirty three German soldiers were killed but the reprisals took the lives of 335 innocent Italians. Despite such costs, and considering our own experience in Iraq, Deak makes a good case for rejecting the judgment of military historians that the resistance was of little significance in hastening the defeat of Germany. The part on retributions is also quite a sad tale, in that it points out how often the guilty got off, partly in deference to the perceived needs of the Cold War, and how often the innocent were punished, mostly in the form of massive ethnic cleansing that took place in much of Eastern Europe. Deak's keen eye for the bizarre and the ironic is also evident throughout this work. For example, in May, 1945, a German unit that was captured by the British after the general surrender borrowed British rifles so that they could carry out death sentences on German soldiers who had been earlier condemned for desertion. Sad as most of the stories are, the wealth of anecdotes and their master retelling will fascinate most history buffs. The Epilogue even leaves one hopeful. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Not even supposed heroes pass the test! By Customer In Deak's view, it is hard to find innocent people in Europe, not even in Denmark or Great Britain. Few would not agree. Revealing stories of national accommodation, lack of resistance and opportunism. In situations where always one's life was at stake, Deak seems to demand personal sacrifices and heroism and a clear vision of future only a blend of a kamikaze and a whizzard could afford. Balanced analysis of collaboration and resistance. Underlying political and historical analysis is missing or extremely simplistic. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Deak is objective in his assessment and shows a good grasp of history. By Eniko A very comprehensive review of the complicated situation in Europe as countries struggled to choose between the Nazis and the Communists. This was especially crucial in Hungary where the situation was complicated by Hitler playing Hungary off against the successor states of Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Romania which had profited from the land grab at the end of World War I. In an effort to regain at least the areas inhabited by a Hungarian majority, Hungary was drawn into Hitler's sphere of influence. Deak is objective in his assessment and shows a good grasp of history. He is sensitive to the Jewish issue, and maybe less so to the nationality issue, but he does not neglect this either. All in all, a very good assessment of the choices faced by millions in the Second World War.

In *Europe on Trial*, acclaimed historian István Deák explores the history of collaboration, retribution, and resistance during World War II. These three themes are examined through the experiences of people and countries under German occupation, as well as Soviet, Italian, and other military rule. Those under foreign rule faced innumerable moral and ethical dilemmas, including the question of whether to cooperate with their occupiers, try to survive the war without any political involvement, or risk their lives by becoming resisters. Many chose all three, depending on wartime conditions. Following the brutal war, the author discusses the purges of real or alleged war criminals and collaborators,

through various acts of violence, deportations, and judicial proceedings at the Nuremberg International Military Tribunal as well as in thousands of local courts. *Europe on Trial* helps us to understand the many moral consequences both during and immediately following World War II. Foreword by Norman M. Naimark

“A rich and complex analysis of the most controversial and neglected aspects of the war. Unbiased, it destroys various national myths and presents a sad story about political and human weaknesses. . . . The greatest strength of *Europe on Trial* is its virtuoso elaboration of the striking paradoxes of the behavior of nation-states' governments and populations.” —*Holocaust and Genocide Studies* “This particular study is concise and does not shun unambiguous opinions. It does not avoid daring comparisons, either, talking to the reader outright, using an uncomplicated and clear language . . . *Europe on Trial* . . . offers a fresh look on the topics it deals with, and a broad perspective in which they are set, enabling to grasp (cor)relations and associations between phenomena that usually tend to be perceived as separate.” —*Acta Poloniae Historica* “This book should attract huge interest, not only among those of us who teach upper-level modern European history courses, but from the greater public as well.” —Nancy Wingfield, Northern Illinois University “Traditionally, historians have made a sharp break in 1945, either covering the war or postwar but not both. Recently, more and more scholars are realizing that the 1939-1949 decade hangs together in many ways. It is a real strength of this book that it embraces the whole decade.” —James Felak, University of Washington “István Deák's essays on Europe's crisis decades have long been indispensable reading for historians of modern Europe. His new book crowns a distinguished career, and offers a truly fresh perspective on one of the most fascinating and fateful periods in twentieth-century European history.” —Bruce Thompson, University of California, Santa Cruz “This is an excellent contribution on an important subject by an experienced scholar. The truly European range of the exposition is impressive. The interpretations are interesting and the attempt at evaluative balance exemplary.” —Konrad H. Jarausch, University of North Carolina “No historian is better suited than István Deák to survey collaboration, resistance, and retribution in relation to the Second World War. *Europe on Trial* excavates the complexities, ambiguities, and ironies of these occupation experiences. Deák's insightful analysis and vibrant storytelling also follows an unerring moral compass. Here is a master scholar's eloquent meditation on Hitler's Europe.” —James Mace Ward, University of Rhode Island “Professor Deák has provided an essential service to the historical profession by writing a book which provides a synthetic overview of collaboration and resistance in Nazi-Dominated Europe. His book fills an enormous gap in the textbook literature on the Third Reich by viewing the period through the lens of the various national histories of occupation and domination. He also illuminates the extent to which the Holocaust could not have been accomplished without the willing collaboration of many Europeans.” —Benjamin Lapp, Montclair State University “A good deal of the literature, especially on collaboration and retribution, is focused on western Europe. Deák, an accomplished scholar of modern central and east European history, brings much-needed balance to this discussion.” —Robert Blobaum, West Virginia University “The eminent Hungarian-American historian István Deák has delivered one of his finest works with this book that problematizes what once seemed a deceptively simple history of the Second World War. In a lucid manner and an admirably brief fashion, Deák's work offers a comprehensive account of the ‘collaboration, accommodation, resistance, and retribution’ of all European countries . . . Altogether, this book may very well become a classic as the standard textbook regarding issues of resistance versus collaboration in Europe of the Nazi-era. . . . It is to be hoped, however, that this book reaches a far broader audience than that of college or university researchers and students, as it is a magnificent treatment of ‘civilian life’ in the Second World War.” —*Hungarian Cultural Studies Journal* “Deák . . . has his readers ponder all the right questions. With no easy answers, this survey is rich with the moral conundrums that are the stuff of great classroom teaching. Indeed, the author's probing questions put our own moral certitudes on trial.” —Slavic “Deák [is] one of great pioneers of the study of Eastern and Central Europe . . . In this book, published in Deák's 89th year, he brings together a persuasive account of all of the dilemmas of occupation, as experienced by exceptional people such as Stollár and by the less courageous majority. It unites experiences that are usually separated, between east and west, between the occupied states and the actively collaborating ones, between left and right. His major case is all too relevant today: Europeans were too willing to make an accommodation with Nazi power when Western democracy seemed weak. The governing myth of Europeans is that they have learned something from the Second World War; this book indicates how much remains to be learned, on that side of the Atlantic and on this one.” —Timothy Snyder, author of *Black Earth* “Sparing few words, István Deák brilliantly captures the complex and contradictory world that confronted Europeans under Nazi rule. From Belgium to Bulgaria, from the first German conquests to postwar trials, the book presents a refreshingly original and deeply insightful narrative that upends traditional stories of heroism, perseverance, or betrayal. In riveting and accessible prose, Deák gives us a story that will become the standard in university courses on the war and modern European history.” —Benjamin Frommer, Northwestern University “István Deák takes the reader on a sweeping survey of some of the bleakest aspects of a bleak period in European history. He dispenses with comforting national myths and unexamined assumptions of national virtue. World War II was, as he writes, ‘one of the greatest tragedies that humans ever brought upon themselves’ . . . a verdict that is amply illustrated by the many evocative, insightful, and distressing examples of human behavior that fill his book.” —*The New York Times* “Deák's latest book is the

product of a long and distinguished career that has produced some of the English-speaking world's most important scholarship concerning the history of eastern and central Europe during the 20th century.” —CHOICE
In *Europe on Trial*, István Deák offers a penetrating and often distressing analysis of the complex moral and ethical dilemmas facing Europeans during World War II. In the process, he writes a much needed counter narrative to the better known, uplifting stories of courage and honorable behavior. His far more multifaceted tale exposes the indifference and overall inhumanity of Europeans during the war.” —Michigan War Studies