Hitlerland: American Eyewitnesses to the Nazi Rise to Power

Andrew Nagorski
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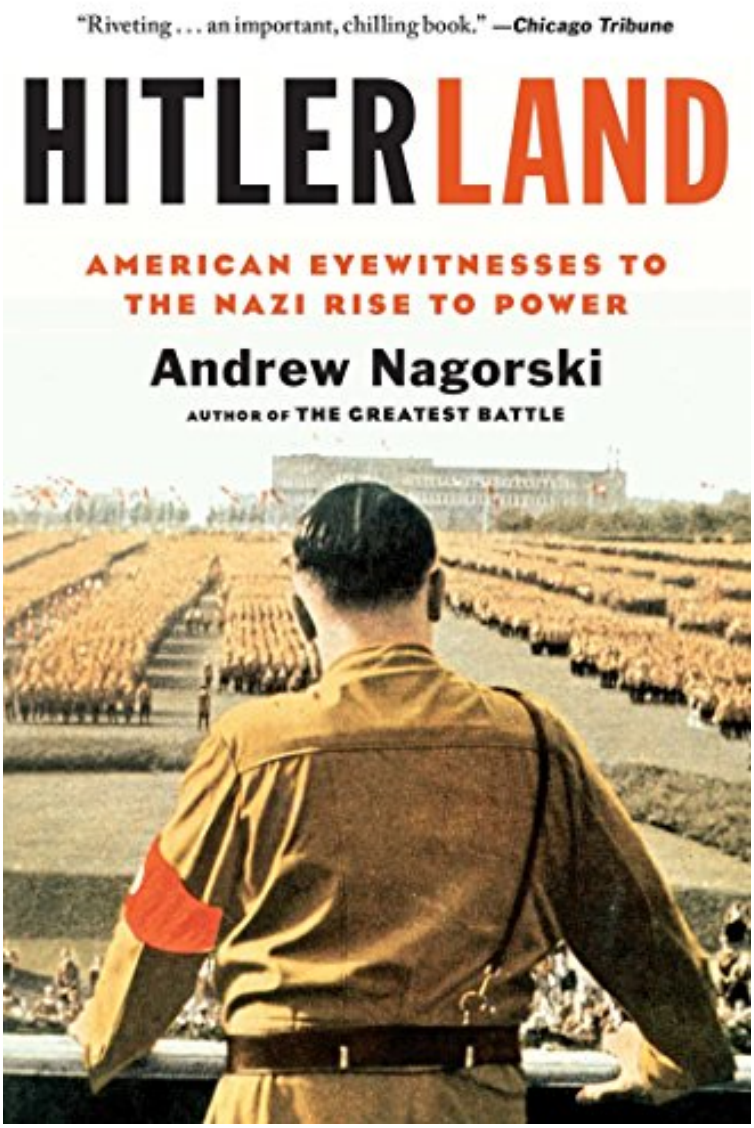

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Andrew Nagorski : Hitlerland: American Eyewitnesses to the Nazi Rise to Power before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Hitlerland: American Eyewitnesses to the Nazi Rise to Power:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. HitlerlandBy Homer EamesExcellent historical review of the contemporaneous American view of Hitler's rise to power. The American witnesses to Hitler's rise to power in the 1920s and 1930s is chilling in its prescience of the coming madness. In 2016 it resonates with American elections in

which one major candidate, who doesn't hide his fascist sympathies, uses hatred as a major message of his campaign. His followers, I know several personally, are as scary as the Nazi followers if Hitler. An excellent introduction to the view that historically people knew how bad things could get but were not in a position to stop the coming tragedy.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Viewpoint from non official Americans inside Pre WW2 Germany..By JBhuskysBased on diaries in published letters and comments from much of the press core leading up to the war, it gives one a different view point than most of the observations from the more official government type of individuals. Enjoyed the book...0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A real insight into the work of journalists in prewar Nazi GermanyBy RogerIn these times looking back at prewar Nazi Germany and the impressions of Americans living there and the work of journalists could be an important lesson for us now in resisting a similar fate in Trumpland. An important and well written history of those times.

“Hitlerland is a bit of a guilty pleasure. Reading about the Nazis is not supposed to be fun, but Nagorski manages to make it so. Readers new to this story will find it fascinating” (The Washington Post).Hitler’s rise to power, Germany’s march to the abyss, as seen through the eyes of Americans—diplomats, military officers, journalists, expats, visiting authors, Olympic athletes—who watched horrified and up close. “Engaging if chilling…a broader look at Americans who had a ringside seat to Hitler’s rise” (USA TODAY), Hitlerland offers a gripping narrative full of surprising twists—and a startlingly fresh perspective on this heavily dissected era.

"Andrew Nagorski has written an entertaining chronicle...'Hitlerland' brings back to life some early delusions about Hitler's rise that now seem unthinkable. Any reader trying to puzzle out today's world will be unsettled by the reminder of how easy it is to get things wrong." "--The Economist" "riveting....this is a book that is full of things I never knew, and I found all of them interesting. It should be on everybody's 'must read' list who is interested in history.""--The Daily Beast, Michael Korda" "Hitlerland is a bit of guilty pleasure... fascinating."-"Washington Post""Compulsively readable and deeply researched"-"The Weekly Standard""A compelling work for World War II history buffs or anyone who wants to understand how such devastating evil emerged while the world seemingly watched""- Library Journal""An engrossing study of the times made more fascinating and incredible in retrospect...contextually rich...[a] well marshaled study."- "Kirkus""Andrew Nagorski once again turns his perceptive, seasoned foreign correspondent's eye to a dramatic historical subject. This eye-opening account of the Americans in 1920s and 1930s Berlin offers a totally new perspective on a subject we thought we already knew. "-Anne Applebaum, author of "Gulag: A History""Andrew Nagorski's "Hitlerland "is a fresh, compelling portrait of Nazi Germany, as seen through the eyes of a fascinating array of Americans who lived and worked there during Hitler's rise to power. The extraordinary saga of Putzi Hanfstaengl, a Harvard graduate who became Hitler's court jester, is just one of the many page-turning stories that makes "Hitlerland "a book not to be missed."-Lynne Olson, author of "Citizens of London""The rise of Hitler and the Nazi state, one of the most consequential and profound narratives in all of world politics, receives compelling new treatment in Andrew Nagorski's outstanding "Hitlerland". By illuminating the disparate experiences of the era's preeminent American diplomats, journalists, intellectuals and others, Nagorski has created an engrossing, harrowing and vividly drawn mosaic of eyewitness accounts to one of history's most phenomenal catastrophes."-Gordon M. Goldstein, author of "Lessons In Disaster: McGeorge Bundy and the Path to War in Vietnam""Andrew Nagorski, a deft storyteller, has plumbed the dispatches, diaries, letters, and interviews of American journalists, diplomats and others who were present in Berlin to write a fascinating account of a fateful era."-Henry Kissinger"At times deliciously gossipy, at times thoroughly chilling, "Hitlerland" offers countless novel insights into Germany's evolution from struggling democracy in the 1920s to totalitarian dictatorship in the 1930s. The intimate portraits from Hitler down add an almost tangible sense of the foibles, ambitions, insecurities and perversities of the relatively small top Nazi elite whose actions plunged our world into a catastrophe from which we are yet fully to recover. The Americans themselves come alive as a group of intense, enterprising journalists and diplomats faced with the greatest challenge of their lives."-Misha Glenny, author of "The Balkans 1804-1999 "About the AuthorDuring a long career at Newsweek, award-winning journalist Andrew Nagorski served as the magazine’s bureau chief in Hong Kong, Moscow, Rome, Bonn, Warsaw, and Berlin. He is the author of several books and has written for countless publications. Visit his website: AndrewNagorski.com.Excerpt. Introduction Of all the Americans who reported from Germany between World War I and World War II, no one was quite as well prepared for the assignment as Sigrid Schultz. Born in Chicago in 1893 to parents who had come from Norway, she spent most of her youth, starting at age eight, in Europe. Her father was a successful portrait painter who made Paris his base, which meant Sigrid attended French schools. When he received an assignment to paint the portrait of the king and queen of Württemberg, she also attended German schools for several months, equipping her not only with the language but also with early insights into local attitudes. “Few foreign painters were invited to German courts in those days and the other little girls tried to be nice,” she recalled. “But it was clear that to be non-German was a deficiency. Any foreigner who failed to be dazzled and humbled by German Kultur or efficiency was, at best, an object of pity.” Schultz studied international law at the Sorbonne and then moved to Berlin with her parents.

There, she witnessed World War I from the losing side. Once the United States entered the war in 1917, she and her parents had to report every day to the police as “enemy aliens,” but she was able to continue her studies, taking courses at Berlin University. In the aftermath of that conflict, the Chicago Tribune hired her to work with its Berlin correspondent Richard Henry Little, who was impressed with her language skills. But from the moment she started her new job in early 1919, she demonstrated her reporting skills as well, teaming up with Little on assignments. Together, Schultz and Little interviewed dozens of German officers to get a sense of their mood in the wake of Germany’s defeat. Most were bitter, but none more so than “a sour, disagreeable little man in navy blue, whose name was Raeder,” Schultz wrote. The German officer told the two reporters: “You Americans need not feel proud of yourselves. Within twenty-five years at the latest, your country and my country will be at war again. And this time we shall win, because we will be better prepared than you will be.” The Americans didn’t take offense—quite the contrary. “I well remember how, on that day in 1919, we felt sorry for vengeful little Raeder,” Schultz noted. “He was taking defeat so hard. He was, we felt, simply consuming himself with hatred.” Schultz became the Chicago Tribune’s chief correspondent for Central Europe in 1926, and she remained based in Berlin until 1941, impressing successive waves of the otherwise almost all-male American press corps with her knowledge of Germany and her tenaciousness in chasing down stories. Looking back at her experiences in her book Germany Will Try It Again, written and published during World War II, she argued that Raeder’s bitterness was widely shared by his countrymen, along with his eagerness to avenge their defeat in the previous global conflagration. By that point, of course, she knew where this bitterness had led, and the question arises whether some of her descriptions were colored by hindsight. But in the case of her recollection of the interview with Raeder, it appears that she only added a final flourish to emphasize the accuracy of his prediction: “When, almost twenty-two years later, Adolf Hitler declared war on the United States, the man commanding the German Navy was Grand Admiral Dr. Erich Raeder.” Much has been written about Americans in France and Great Britain during the interwar period, and even a fair amount about Americans in the Soviet Union. But, for a variety of reasons, the Americans who lived, worked or traveled in Germany at the time when Hitler was coming to power and then forged the Third Reich haven’t attracted anything like that level of attention—including Schultz and many of her colleagues. In fact, they are often forgotten. Or, like diplomat George Kennan, they may be remembered, but not for their German experiences; the German chapter in their lives was eclipsed by other parts of their biographies that made them famous—in Kennan’s case, as the architect of the containment policy that successive postwar presidents pursued in dealing with the Soviet Union. As a result, Americans often have the impression that the collapse of the Weimar Republic and the subsequent rush to terror and war took place in a strange, isolated country. Few of them pause to ask who were the Americans there who witnessed these events firsthand, how they perceived and reported them either as part of their jobs or simply as curious visitors, and what kind of impact their accounts had on their countrymen’s views of Germany at the time. Today, it’s conventional wisdom that Hitler’s intentions were perfectly clear from the outset and that his policies could only result in World War II and the Holocaust. Most people find it hard to imagine that in the 1920s and right through the 1930s, American reporters, diplomats, entertainers, sociologists, students and others living in or passing through Germany wouldn’t have all instantly seen and understood what was happening before their eyes. After all, they had ringside seats, providing them with an unparalleled view of the most dramatic story of the twentieth century. Several of them not only observed Hitler from afar, but met and spoke to him, both when he was still a local agitator in Munich and then the all-powerful dictator in Berlin. To them, he wasn’t some abstract embodiment of evil but a real-life politician. Some Americans tried to take his measure very early, while others did so once he was in power. And even those who didn’t have those opportunities witnessed the consequences of his actions. Yet their readings of what was happening in Germany, and what Hitler represented, varied greatly. There were those who met Hitler and recognized he represented almost a primeval force and possessed an uncanny ability to tap into the emotions and anger of the German people, and those who dismissed him as a clownish figure who would vanish from the political scene as quickly as he had appeared. There were those who, at least initially, viewed him and his movement sympathetically or even embraced it, and those whose instinctive misgivings quickly gave way to full-scale alarm, recognizing that he was a threat not only to Germany but also to the world. It wasn’t just Americans who didn’t know what to make of Hitler or who hadn’t really examined what passed for his worldview. Otto Strasser, an early follower of Hitler who later broke with him and escaped from Germany, recalled a dinner with several top Nazi officials at the 1927 Party Congress in Nuremberg. When it became apparent no one had read Hitler’s autobiographical screed Mein Kampf in its entirety, they agreed that they would ask anyone who joined them if he had done so—and stick that person with the bill. “Nobody had read Mein Kampf, so everyone had to pay his own bill,” Strasser reported. The unfolding of history only looks inevitable in retrospect, and the judgments of the Americans who were witnessing these events unfold were based on a variety of factors: their predispositions, the different slices of reality that they observed and whether at times they saw only what they wanted to see, whatever the signals to the contrary. Schultz chose to highlight Raeder’s comments in 1919 to bolster her thesis later, once the United States and Germany were at war again, that Hitler’s movement was the logical outcome of the hate fomented by the country’s defeat in the previous war. But other Americans dwelled on their warm reception in the aftermath of World War I, and wanted to believe that the toll of that conflict had been so high that it had served as a

decisive object lesson. Edgar Ansel Mowrer, the Berlin correspondent for the rival Chicago paper, the Daily News, recalled that in the 1920s “most Americans in Germany nourished a legitimate hope that Germany’s defeat, humiliation, inflation and internal disorders had brought home to most citizens the folly of again seeking European hegemony.” While correspondents like Schultz and Mowrer, and diplomats like Kennan and several of his colleagues, were hardly innocents abroad—they had studied and worked elsewhere in Europe—many of the Americans who were in Germany in this period were both very young and very inexperienced. This, of course, colored their perceptions and influenced their reactions. They were alternately charmed, shocked and mesmerized by Germany’s combination of old world rigidity and new, postwar world extremism, whether in political or sexual behavior. As a result of their country’s peculiar role, Americans in Germany were in a special position. Although the United States had joined in the fighting in World War I, it was only in its later stages. Most Americans were far from eager to be dragged into a new European conflict, which accounted for the strength of isolationist sentiments back home. Americans in Germany were put in a different category than the other winners of World War I: they were seen as almost neutral, far less vengeful than the French, in particular, and, in general, more willing to give the defeated Germans the benefit of the doubt. As observers, they could stand a bit outside and above the continental rivalries. Like Americans everywhere, they also tended to live a privileged existence, observing the material deprivations and growing violence but usually sheltered from them personally. They socialized extensively with each other, celebrated Thanksgiving and other holidays, and enjoyed the trappings of the expat lifestyle while monitoring the bigger events that swirled all around them. Louis Lochner, who reported for the Associated Press throughout this period, made casual men...