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Review of Hart, B.W. (2018) Hitler's American friends: the Third Reich's supporters in the United States

Gawthorpe, A.J.

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Chapter 3 explores the role of Jews in the Nazi cultural establishment. Beyond the regime's attacks, repression, exile, and murder of Jews, this chapter follows the fortunes of the Jewish Cultural League, whose history shows the Third Reich's synchronization of anti-Jewish policies, the war, and cultural politics. This analysis exemplifies Kater's desire to write a new history of the Third Reich through culture. Chapter 4 covers culture and propaganda during World War II and offers particularly striking details on how Joseph Goebbels used culture, especially the press, to support the fragile and often-flagging public morale in wartime. Here too Kater's deft pairing of military, political, and cultural history is novel and illuminating.

Chapter 5 on émigré artists tells the story of about half a million German speakers, including approximately 278,000 Jews, who fled Germany for mostly hostile locations. Almost half landed in the United States, and few among them flourished. Regulations, professional and linguistic barriers, depression, alcoholism, and different cultural landscapes left most of them indigent. Kater offers a mini-biography of the prickly Thomas Mann, who used his eminence to attack the Third Reich, as well as a wealth of stories about less successful exiles. Chapter 6 is about Germany after World War II and reveals that cultural continuities undermined new political systems, especially in West Germany. The fact that most exiled artists were not welcomed back after the war illustrates that Nazism's legacy lasted longer and ran deeper than most Germans cared to admit. Kater reveals that most artists who stayed and survived in Nazi Germany did so by making significant moral compromises. Very few avoided working with Hitler's regime or managed to do any kind of good from within. All in all, it's an informative and invaluable book, but the conclusions are sobering and dispiriting.

All in all, this is an informative, invaluable, but not necessarily inspirational book. Kater also mentions a few of his own personal conversations with people discussed in its pages, which emphasizes the fact that he has been working on these topics since the 1960s. A massive accomplishment that draws on nearly fifty years of work and scholarly experience, *Culture in Nazi Germany* will be the standard work on this important topic for years to come.

DAVID IMHOOF

SUSQUEHANNA UNIVERSITY

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Hitler's American Friends: The Third Reich's Supporters in the United States. By Bradley W. Hart. New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2018. Pp. 236. Cloth \$28.99. ISBN 978-1250148957.

Bradley W. Hart's book explores the history of American individuals and movements sympathetic to Nazi Germany in the 1930s and 1940s, and does not shrink from addressing their contemporary resonance. The result is a comprehensive catalogue of pro-Nazi figures in America, including fascinating coverage of some lesser-known individuals. The narrative style makes the book a pleasure to read, but the focus on leaders leaves the book with comparatively little to say about the motivations and experiences of the ordinary Americans who participated in movements like America First and the German-American Bund.

Hart argues that we ought to divide the people he describes as Hitler's American friends into two camps: those working directly for the German government to sow disinformation

and confusion in an attempt to keep the United States out of World War II and those who voluntarily aligned themselves with the Nazis due to a mixture of motives (6–9). Of the latter groups, Hart argues that they were mainly held together by the glue of antisemitism (17). As his empirical chapters show, the desire to keep the United States out of the European war was also a strong motivating factor for many of these groups.

Perhaps the most valuable contribution of this book is its coverage of movements and personalities little known to the general reader. The chapter on the Silver Legion and its leader William Dudley Pelley is particularly good. Pelley, a Hollywood scriptwriter turned mystic, led a movement that sought to establish a Christian Commonwealth, provide a universal basic income, and re-enslave African Americans. As Hart explains, one of the appeals of such movements was their syncretic combination of Nazism and Americanism. The Silver Legion's official anthem was the "Battle Hymn of the Republic," whereas the German-American Bund famously displayed both American and Nazi flags at their rallies.

As Hart shows, the Nazi government usually wanted as little as possible to do with such movements. In fact, these movements might best be described less as Hitler's American *friends* and more as Hitler's American *fans*. Prior to the Nazi declaration of war on the United States, Berlin saw little benefit in interfering in American politics, lest it create a pretext for war. Berlin even threatened to strip citizenship from German immigrants participating in such movements. By the time war broke out, movements like the Bund and America First were petering out, discredited by geopolitical reality.

Hart is keen to stress—and perhaps somewhat overstates—the threat posed by Hitler's American friends to the US government. He argues that only an "uneasy combination of wise statesmanship and sheer luck" stopped a nightmare scenario in which "the US would never have entered World War II, Britain would have fallen under Nazi occupation and, ultimately, a version of National Socialism would have taken root in the United States" (17). He even compares the German American Bund to the Nazi Party, pointing out that although the Bund had few members, so did the Nazis before they seized power. "Who was to say that under the right circumstances [the Bund] could not pull off a similar feat?" (33). Given the enormous differences between the political and security situations in the United States and Weimer Germany, this analogy strains credulity.

Hart concludes that despite Hitler's American friends posing "a series of major existential threats" to the American political system, they "never stood much of a chance" due to "courageous stands by American leaders" (236). Although a clear and laudable presentist point is being made here—America's political leaders should stand up to the Far Right—the point is somewhat dubious as a matter of historical fact. As Hart himself demonstrates, Hitler's American friends rarely managed to transcend their marginality, and there was a definite ceiling on how much support they could attain. The incompetence and infighting of many of the movement's leaders, plus the fact that Japan and Germany declared war on the United States in 1941, drove further nails into their political coffin. Hitler's American friends may have been existential threats if measured by their goals, but scarcely so if measured by their achievements. The fact that they were never taken seriously by Hitler's government is further testament to their essential marginality.

In sum, Hart has written an interesting book that provides a fine overview of pro-Nazi sentiment in the United States in the 1930s and 1940s. It is recommended for those

seeking to understand the full spectrum of American support for the Nazis and for its fine writing style.

ANDREW J. GAWTHORPE

LEIDEN UNIVERSITY

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The Kindertransport: Contesting Memory. By Jennifer Craig-Norton. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019. Pp. xiii + 353. Paper \$40.00. ISBN 978-0253042217.

In November 1938, the British Parliament approved a child-rescue program colloquially known as the Kindertransport. Until World War II halted the scheme, it brought nearly 10,000 children whom the Nazis racially categorized as Jewish to the British Isles. The program occupies a secure place in British national memory, for example, with a segment in the Imperial War Museum's Holocaust exhibit. Books, curricula, and theatrical presentations on the Kindertransport have become popular ways to introduce children to the Holocaust, and the documentary film *Into the Arms of Strangers: Stories of the Kindertransport* won the 2000 Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature.

These artifacts of historical memory rely on a heartwarming narrative set against the backdrop of tragedy. There are the children, saved from near-certain death. There are the ordinary Britons, who opened their homes to endangered children. There are heroic figures like Nicholas Winton, since knighted, who spirited 669 children out of Czechoslovakia. And there are the grownup children, matured into successful adults and grateful to the land that rescued them.

Jennifer Craig-Norton's book tells a different tale. It is equally notable for its recasting of the Kindertransport story and for its methodological lessons. At the heart of the book are case files for individual Kindertransport children, which have languished for decades in the archive of the University of Southampton. With most such case files evidently destroyed, Craig-Norton's find is significant. The files concern children who entered Britain on a program for children with Polish citizenship who had been deported from Germany to Poland, but aside from a few matters such as the families' greater religiosity and the children's double displacement, there is every reason to believe that the case files provide a window into the larger Kindertransport experience.

Craig-Norton devotes chapters to the sponsoring organizations, such as the Refugee Children's Movement, the carers (e.g., foster parents, group home staff, teachers), the children, and the parents. The sum effect is to add previously unknown chapters to this history and to complicate what we thought we knew. Memoirs and oral histories of the Kindertransport children cannot address things they knew nothing about, such as the behind-the-scenes work of the sponsoring organizations or the relationship between the organizations and their foster parents. Craig-Norton discovers unsung heroes, such as sponsoring organizations' efforts to assist the children in ways that remained invisible to the children themselves. More often, her discoveries are unsettling: organizations' dismissive responses to children's cries for help, foster parents' abandonment of their charges when they exhibited signs of trauma, and so on.

The deep dive into children's and parents' perspectives is especially welcome. Craig-Norton makes clear how incomplete the grown refugees' memories are, even regarding their own activities. Older rescued children, for example, frequently petitioned organizations