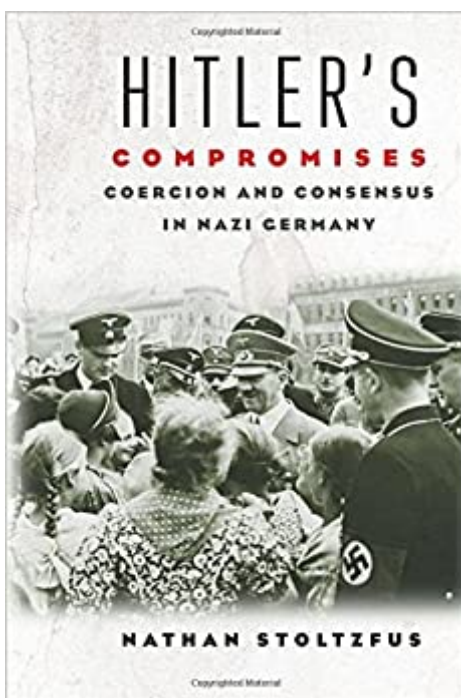


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Hitler's Compromises: Coercion And Consensus In Nazi Germany



Synopsis

A comprehensive and eye-opening examination of Hitler's regime, revealing the numerous strategic compromises he made in order to manage dissent. History has focused on Hitler's use of charisma and terror, asserting that the dictator made few concessions to maintain power. Nathan Stoltzfus, the award-winning author of *Resistance of Heart: Inter-marriage and the Rosenstrasse Protest in Germany*, challenges this notion, assessing the surprisingly frequent tactical compromises Hitler made in order to preempt hostility and win the German people's complete fealty. As part of his strategy to secure a "1,000-year Reich," Hitler sought to convince the German people to believe in Nazism so they would perpetuate it permanently and actively shun those who were out of step with society. When widespread public dissent occurred at home—which most often happened when policies conflicted with popular traditions or encroached on private life—Hitler made careful calculations and acted strategically to maintain his popular image. Extending from the 1920s to the regime's collapse, this revealing history makes a powerful and original argument that will inspire a major rethinking of Hitler's rule.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"A valuable, original interpretation of Nazi rule. Stoltzfus argues that Hitler and his inner circle demonstrated considerable political skill in maintaining a strong base of support. His is a vision of a Hitler constantly looking over his shoulder to make sure that he had the Volk behind

him. This is a very compelling new interpretation, beautifully executed.

—Dolores Augustine, St. John's University (Dolores Augustine)

“Nathan Stoltzfus has produced an insightful examination of the occurrence and impact of public dissent in Nazi Germany. He succeeds in answering some significant questions that have occupied generations of scholars.

—Doris L. Bergen, author of *War and Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust* (Doris L. Bergen)

“This book is based on a wealth of sources. It rehearses various episodes that give us an insight into the relationship between the Nazi regime and some sectors of society, including the Christian churches, women evacuees in wartime and the gentile wives of Jewish German men. This is done in greater detail than in many accounts, and the detail is very illuminating. Its message is that, again and again, Hitler chose to compromise with a group that stood up to him and his regime, rather than risk outright confrontation, especially in wartime.

—Jill Stephenson, University of Edinburgh (Jill Stephenson)

“Nathan Stoltzfus is renowned for his groundbreaking work documenting the historic protests by the women of Rosenstrasse in Berlin in 1943. In this fascinating book, Stoltzfus again overturns conventional wisdoms about the Nazi dictatorship, with vivid examples of the impact of resistance and protest even in the harshest of times.

—Steve Crawshaw, author of *Easier Fatherland: Germany and the Twenty-First Century* and *Street Spirit: The Power of Protest and Mischief* (Steve Crawshaw)

“An in-depth examination of the tactical compromises Hitler made in order to consolidate power . . . A lucid work of historical argumentation that succeeds in establishing compromise as a crucial instrument in Hitler's political arsenal.

—Kirkus Reviews (Kirkus Reviews)

“A masterful examination of Hitler's real responsibility.

—Choice (Choice)

“Stoltzfus demonstrates that by pretending to be moderate at key points, Hitler worked to enlist Germans to fulfill his mission of building a New Order, a sobering reminder about the threat posed to any democratic society by a crafty demagogue.

—Jacob Heilbrunn, *World War II Magazine* (Jacob Heilbrunn *World War II Magazine*)

“Indispensable reading for students of the period.

—Open Letters Monthly (Open Letters Monthly)

“Stoltzfus has elaborated a new perspective on the politics of the Nazi regime.

—Winnipeg Free Press (Winnipeg Free Press)

“This is an impressive book, which will be of much interest and benefit to scholars and students of German history.

—German Studies Review (German Studies Review)

“A sophisticated and nuanced account of the Third Reich. . . . An impressive book, which will be of much interest and benefit to scholars and students of German history.

—European History Quarterly (European History Quarterly)

Nathan Stoltzfus is Dorothy and Jonathan Rintels Professor of Holocaust Studies at Florida State University. He has been a Fulbright and IREX scholar in West and East Germany and an H. F. Guggenheim Foundation scholar. His work has appeared in the Atlantic Monthly and Die Zeit. He lives in Tallahassee and Washington, DC.

A very interesting take on Hitler. It shows him to be much more subject to popular sentiment than most believe and it shows the limitations of German citizens in those days. They were willing to defend a local bishop; not their Jewish neighbors. But when they did act on behalf of the Jews (the Rosenstrasse protests) they were remarkably effective.

A summary of the review on StrategyPage.Com' Prof. Stoltzfus (Florida State) argues convincingly that, in significant contrast to his Soviet counterpart Stalin, while dealing harshly with outright resistance, Hitler was quite willing to tolerate some degree of dissent from his policies, at least from those who were ethnic Germans. In making his case, Stoltzfus notes a surprising number of cases in which Hitler, rather than like Stalin using brute force and terror, resorted to a carrot and stick policy, massaging the masses as it were, thus pushing people in directions he wanted them to go, even curbing some of his more ideologically determined followers in the process. So, for example, Protestant clergy unwilling to join the Reich Church were usually not disturbed, albeit they did not necessarily reap the benefits showered on their counterparts who joined the regime's religious institution. This use of soft power allowed Hitler to coax those with some doubts about the regime into fuller cooperation, or at least non-opposition. These innovative insights into Hitler's policies will be of interest to any student of the Third Reich or of authoritarian and totalitarian regimes in general.' For the full review, see StrategyPage.Com

Hitler's Compromises demonstrates that public protest forced the Nazis to delay, alter, camouflage, and even abandon certain goals to avoid alienating popular support. Stoltzfus keeps Hitler's ultimate goal - supplanting traditional values with National Socialist ideology - squarely in view while examining the dictator's incremental populist approach of pressure and compromise, education over coercion, sensitivity to protest, and intent to displace rather than destroy tradition. Case studies of confrontation with the public over church policy, political consolidation, euthanasia, civilian

evacuations, and racial policy illustrate how organized public protest both shielded "loyal opponents" who appealed to Hitler for redress and successfully influenced the regime to slow, alter, or even revert certain programs. A very different view of Hitler, deferential to popular attitudes and taking pains to avoid alienating support, emerges. The book is ideal for readers who want to understand how Germans could support a regime responsible for monstrous crimes against humanity.

Traditionally, historians of the Third Reich have characterized public protest as suicidal, impossible, or ultimately meaningless. By emphasizing Hitler's determination to maintain support, Stoltzfus brings together recent research on Nazi Germany as a "popular dictatorship" into a fresh perspective that situates compromise, coercion, and terror as part of an array of options to build and maintain consensus. Terror and coercion, though present in the book, are illustrated through the experiences of social outsiders and targeted minorities quite apart from the majority of Germans. Focusing on Hitler's determination to avoid confrontation with these "Aryans" who belonged in the Nazi's so-called "People's Community," and his willingness to compromise on certain issues anchored in longstanding traditions that could provoke a widespread public backlash, meanwhile stakes out an important middle ground for understanding the enduring popularity of Nazism.

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