



Army of Evil: A History of the SS

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In Nazi Germany, they were called the Schutzstaffel. The world would know them as the dreaded SS—the most loyal and ruthless enforcers of the Third Reich!

It began as a small squad of political thugs. Yet by the end of 1935, the SS had taken control of all police and internal security duties in Germany—ranging from local village “gendarmes” all the way up to the secret political police and the Gestapo. And by 1944 the militarized Waffen SS had more than eight hundred thousand men serving in the field, even rivaling Germany’s regular armed forces, the Wehrmacht.

In *Army of Evil: A History of the SS*, author Adrian Weale delves into materials not previously available, including recently released intelligence files, the most up-to-date research and rare and never-before-published photographs.

Going beyond the myths and characterizations, this comprehensive account reveals the reality of the SS as a cadre of unwavering political fanatics and power-seeking opportunists who slavishly followed an ideology that disdained traditional morality, and were prepared to implement it to the utmost, murderous extreme that ultimately resulted in the Holocaust.

This is a definitive historical narrative of the birth, legacy, and ultimate demise of one of the most feared political and military organizations ever known, and those twisted, cruel men who were responsible for one of the most appalling crimes against humanity in all history.

Army of Evil: A History of the SS Details

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From Reader Review *Army of Evil: A History of the SS* for online ebook

Eric says

I am not too sure how many other ways there are to package the evil that was Nazi Germany. The author set out, I thought, to distinguish the actions of the SS from those of other organs of the German Reich in carrying out the directions of Hitler. After a while it seems that they all pretty much blend together - a likely outcome any time a megalomanaical dictator takes in hand all the reigns. There were some interesting nuggets scattered throughout. For example, the original desire to have only the elite serve in the SS had to give way to reality when war needs overtook events. And the separateness of procurement and recruiting for the SS put it in competition with the Wehrmacht early. Some interesting characters rose to the top, but it's hard to say whether there were not equally as manner unique military officers.

Dirck Halstead says

Essential reading for scholars of World War II. It is fascinating to read how the SS evolved out of the Brown Shirts, and how quickly they took power in what was then a free, but defeated country.

Elgin says

Having read widely about WWII I always look for books that focus on some narrow aspect of the war and the people and organizations surrounding it. This book is an in depth look at the Nazi SS (Schutzstafflen) and its role in the holocaust. As with most books on this subject, there was a good deal of graphic description of the details of how the holocaust was implemented. Disturbing reading but nonetheless memories of this need to be kept in public awareness to help make sure it does not happen again. The book gave a very complete history of the SS from its early incarnations as an elite bodyguard group for the National Socialist German Worker's Party (NSDAP) through its role in the "final solution" to the Jewish question. Weale goes into excruciating detail on the various spin-offs, name and department changes, and personnel related to the SS...I found it hard (or impossible) to keep all of the offices and people straight, but understand that this is part of writing such a complete history. Though I had read much of this history in other sources, I did learn a lot from Weale's documentation of the evolution of various other methods and ideas to address the Jewish question before deciding that genocide was the only answer.

Alger says

There are definite limits to my ability to sustain interest in any institutional history, and this book greatly exceeds it. Weale's best sections are those that track the origins of the SS and sketches out the biographies of the leading figures of the organization as they moved into positions of power. The book drags, however, once the pieces are in place. At the point where the SS begins to diversify (perhaps fragment is a better word) into a number of semi-independent operations the book loses its continuity and sense of purpose. By design, this history of the SS branches like a tree, stemming out of a single root but eventually sprawling and

immense at the end. Because this branching is an individual narrative, and the branching occurs in time, persons like Heydrich that arrived relatively late to the SS join, build a career, and are killed in one early story line, but then make cameo appearances in nearly every chapter following. This muddies the book horribly. It just keeps looping back onto itself and describes the same events endlessly from different angles.

It is as good a history of the SS as can be expected, but it is not a casual read for someone not deeply invested in Nazi institutional history.

Theresa says

Very well written history of what started as a handful of political thugs and morphed into an elite order that provided the manpower to implement Hitler's will and served as an instrument of genocide. A highly recommended read for anyone interested in WWII and holocaust history.

Jill Hutchinson says

After the Putsch and his release from prison, Hitler began to put together a group of men who initially would be his personal bodyguard troop but in the bigger picture, he envisioned something else. And indeed, after the "night of the long knives", the SS became the strongest and most feared arm of the Nazi terror troops. They represented the "perfect Aryan", tall, blonde, and "pure blooded" (although this changed in the last two years of the war) who answered to no one but Himmler and Hitler. This book follows the beginning to the end of an army of men who were responsible for crimes that will continue to astound and horrify for all time....the Death's Head Corps with their skull and crossbones insignia who were assigned to the death camps; the Waffen-SS who visited unbelievable cruelty on the Russians during Operation Barbarossa; and the other departments of the SS of which not as much has been written. The author covers the total organization, its leaders, its goals, and the internal machinations of this huge machine of terror. I would highly recommend this book if you are a WWII buff.

Maku Sato says

A facile, pedestrian book about the ironically multi-cultural Waffen-SS. The best portions of which concern SS training. Envisioned by Heinrich Himmler, a torpid ambitious sycophantic bureaucrat, the SS (Schutzstaffel or "protection squad") were originally meant to be Hitler's bodyguards. But with tumescent defense spending so Hitler could wage his war for "living space," they metastasized into mythical military death squad. Himmler, creative cockroach that he was, envisioned the SS to be the forefront of his Aryan master race to reflect everything that he was not - blond, tall and lean. Instead, as the Waffen-SS grew, it included Muslims, token Japanese and non-Aryans. As political fanatics, the Waffen-SS were efficient in burning villages, killing women and children, murdering Allied soldiers in captivity and continuing to fight long after the Normandy invasion. However, as the war progressed and the original Waffen-SS were killed, the abilities of the remaining soldiers deteriorated and were ultimately destroyed and humiliated by the victorious Red Army.

Court Hansen says

What a bunch of evil, dangerous, and stupid men.

Guy Nasuti says

Very good look at the inner-workings of the SS, including the Waffen-SS. It was admittedly tough to get through all the various departments and political-trappings that made up the SS under Himmler. Weale covers the foreign elements of the SS fairly well, including the strange story of the British Free Corps that was a part of the Waffen-SS towards the end of the war. However, there seems to be a lack of any use of memoirs, quotes, or stories of ordinary Germans that served with this unusual organization, which started out as a bodyguard unit for Adolf Hitler and was later militarized as a combat branch of the German armed forces. Infamous units such as the Deaths Head and Einsatzgruppen, were partly or wholly responsible in many areas of Europe and Eastern Europe for the persecution and murder of Jews, Allied POWs, and many other persons. Still, the focus is more on the origin and the beginnings of the SS prior to the war, and how their role developed in time (mostly through Himmler) in the planning and execution of the Holocaust.

Bob Blecha says

One might suspect that the author was weaned on Reader's Digest Condensed Books. While adequate for the high school scholar, the mature armchair historian is best advised to keep the laptop close at hand to run down references

BAM The Bibliomaniac says

This book was so factual and statistical it was dry. I finished it because I hate starting a book and not following through unless it's just unbearable. But I really didn't enjoy this much

Daren Doucet says

Imagine yourself- living in a world where your conflicting political, religious, or racial, non mainstream views with the current political system can lead you to a life in prison, or quite possibly death!

This was a very extensive look into the very disturbing, terrifying, events of human history from the late 1800s to the later trial years of the post war and 1950's. Political opponents, criminals, different races, subjected to deadly military experiments, torture, starvation, and the death chamber itself.

When freedom of assembly, freedom of speech, freedom of the press are taken away so as to leave an individual at the mercy of the "Leader", makes for a horrifying ordeal.

I gave this book 5 stars on 5, because of its Historic value to humanity as a whole. This book leaves lessons to be learned in how a society may succumb to this, and a very valuable book for younger generations.

Only problem with the book was trying to tie all of the facts and hierarchy together, which could take several readings into getting it straightened out.

But, with real accounts of the suffering of the many during that time, it makes for a great intellectual read, nonetheless.

Matthew Barlow says

Despite being extremely dry reading, this is a very informative book. Weale addresses not only the widely viewed aspect of the SS as war criminals, but explores its origins and its political nature. In fact he makes the not unreasonable case that the SS, and its militarized unit the Waffen-SS, were far from an effective military force. They were constantly at loggerheads with the German military and its command. Weale saves the atrocities of the SS, the death camps, for the end of the book, showing them as the last ditch effort of men such as Himmler and Heydrich to "solve" the "Jewish question". The book dispels the image of the SS as a finely tuned political and military machine, exposing it as a group of bumbling anti-Semites more interested in political infighting than helping Germany to achieve its aims.

Dj says

The author takes a long look at the development of the SS, step by step he walks through the growth and the changes that came over this organization. Interestingly enough he mostly considers it a failure top to bottom. In the end it would appear, at least to outsiders, that Himmler had a massive Empire and was the second most powerful man in Germany, the truth seems to be that he had lost control of most everything. The Waffen SS was under the control of the Army, the Camps were under the control of Kaltenburner (sp?) and the police were under the control of local party bosses.

The book even looks at the myth of the Waffen SS, pointing out that two things about them that have been bandied about are both wrong. The first is that the Waffen SS was significantly different from the General or Concentration Camp SS.

This is shown to be in error when the author points out that the Waffen SS was basically started up from those two other branches of the SS and various other means used to rotate members between the organizations.

The second myth is that the Waffen SS was an elite military arm. This one is the one that generally starts arguments. There are many admirers of the Waffen SS and its combat capability. In general though this admiration is limited to about half a dozen divisions, while the whole of the Waffen SS was made up of, at least on paper, over a hundred. An Elite Unit of such a size would have been formidable, but in general you hear about half a dozen and nothing from or about the rest. Also the Armed SS was a drain on the manpower pool of the rest of the Army. Not just in fighting power, but in the fact that supply and administration had to be doubled and so compete with the existing forces in the Army. Like much about Hitler's Germany it was wasteful and counterproductive.

This book doesn't focus on the actions, but the overall growth and development of the SS. Which makes it a book that is much easier to read and gives a more balanced view of the actions of the SS. Although the author makes it clear that what the SS was doing was evil and the killings were murder.

A very good book to give an overall view of a part of Nazi Germany.

Brit Hopper says

Very engaging. Focused on the personalities, philosophy, and development/evolution of the National Socialists and their rise. Highly detailed on the history and background of the SA and SS, as well as in the personalities behind the organizations. Easy to read and immerse yourself in. I found the discussion on the psychology- that is, these individuals reasoning behind what they did fascinating. This book is designed more for the generalist than the military history buff as you won't get much on the Waffen SS or their campaigns in the East or West. But you will get a chapter on the foreign volunteers and a lot of discussion on the final solution. Worth a read for introduction to the SS; however, there's more detailed and complete histories out there.
