



# The Night of the Generals

*Hans Hellmut Kirst , John Brownjohn (Translator)*

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A Polish prostitute is murdered in Warsaw in 1942. The possible suspects are narrowed down to three German generals, but the investigation eventually comes to nothing. A similar crime happens in Paris in 1944 when all three generals are assembled once more - but again the investigations are halted by the famous 'night of the generals' - the coup against Hitler. Then, in 1956, a third murder occurs in Dresden. This time the killer must be caught...

## The Night of the Generals Details

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Author : Hans Hellmut Kirst , John Brownjohn (Translator)

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# **From Reader Review The Night of the Generals for online ebook**

## **Dave Morris says**

The way the book starts, you might think it fits into the crime genre. And that's true, but the crime is on a much bigger scale than the murder of one person - except, of course, that's exactly the kind of moral accountancy that is used to justify turning a blind eye to the most monstrous acts.

You can read it, then, as a straightforward whodunnit, a political thriller, or as a very black comedy indeed. The translation is stylish, with some a nice line in vivid metaphor, and at no point does it have that Yoda-speak feeling of a foreign language shunted word-for-word into English.

Even before I finished it, I ordered all of Kirst's other novels. I might only read one a year but I can see them being keepers.

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## **carl theaker says**

Subtitle: Les Miserables/Inspector Javert meets Joachim Peiper/Rheinard Heydrich.

An intriguing goodread of a mystery, the backdrop will appeal to WW2 fans of the European theater; a tale of war time Germany, where a police officer is compelled to resolve which German General is murdering prostitutes.

The primary tale of the whodunit is contrasted with the pursuit of justice by the policeman; who would care about the murder of some forgotten prostitutes versus the scale of carnage going on each day; and the morality, can you justify one death? if so, then why not a million?

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## **Greer Noble says**

Probably one of the most exciting novels I've ever read! During World War II, a prostitute is murdered in Warsaw, Poland. Three prominent Nazi generals are immediately suspected. Undeterred, two of them discreetly plot Hitler's assassination. A diligent and tenacious German intelligence office investigating the murder is mysteriously reassigned to Paris. However, the third general, with a few dark secrets of his own, remains loyal to Hitler. Riveting from the first page to the last, the suspense is almost too much to bear. The plot, brilliant, unpredictable. The characters so tangible you can almost feel their presence around you. Be warned, this is a book you won't want to put down.

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## **David Lucero says**

Saw the movie and loved Peter O'Toole and Omar Sharif working together again!

The time is December 1942 Warsaw, Poland. A civilian reports the murder of a woman who happens to be a Polish prostitute working as an agent for the Germans. A German Major (Sharif) is the military police inspector who learns the main suspect to be one of three German Generals (O'Toole, Pleasance, and Gray). Although an officer, the major is devoted to the law and takes extreme lengths to learn who the killer is. During a time of war this proves deadly as he faces roadblocks at every turn.

When the major is unexpectedly promoted to Lt. Colonel and transferred to Paris, he suspects the person behind his promotion to be involved in the murder. Over the course of the war the 3 suspects are brought together in Paris, where the major reopens the case, and possibly the opportunity for the killer to kill him (major) in the process.

The book was good, but I enjoyed the movie better. The writer is good in his descriptions of the time and place during which the story takes place. It's a classic, but slow at times.

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## **Emma says**

I mostly picked up this book to see if it would explain what people at the time might've thought about various things (Prussia or what was left of it by WWII, its military tradition, national socialism, the peculiarities of the army and the people who served in it, and to a lesser extent the events immediately after the war in Germany), and on that note, it delivered. Through the range of characters, Kirst portrays a really wide scope of who knew what and who reacted how. I wasn't expecting the recant of the 20 July plot - super interesting! But done very quickly, possibly in an attempt to make the pacing more thrilling? It's easier if you go into this book having already seen Valkyrie or knowing something about the 20 July plot.

Overall I like what Kirst did with the characters but they get satirised into one of two things a) there's nothing good about you and/or you're a mockery of a human being, how did you manage to get to the position that you are in; or b) your only fault is that you fail despite your best intentions, otherwise you're quite the bro, but a bro that didn't make it all the way, pity that luck's not on your side. I don't root enough for the characters in a) or scorn those in b) enough for the book to be really a satisfying satire? But on the other hand, I don't begrudge Kirst not wanting people to root for the villains because.... they are literally fascists..... it's maybe the case that in 1962 it was a fine line to walk between casting a fascist character in a too-sympathetic light, and contrastively, having to remove flaws from the try-hards to make them more-or-less heroic - too soon for a grey morality WWII novel. A lot of people might argue it's still too soon. The closest thing I think we had was ~~Javert~~ Grau, who is neither a Nazi nor a Good Guy (being aware of atrocities and not doing anything about them), he just wants Justice.

As for the actual structure of the novel in terms of crime novels, it's a lot less like Agatha Christie and a lot more like Georges Simenon in that you have your suspicions early on, you know who did it about half-way through, and from that point on you're trying to see how/if they will wrap up the case. The ending is plausibly realistic and therefore somewhat unsatisfying - I guess that's life.

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## **Czarny Pies says**

This is a fabulous murder mystery involving three Wehrmacht Generals active in WWII. It contains plenty of Nazi era ambiance but at the end of the day it is simply entertainment. I give this novel three stars which is my highest rating for mysteries and thrillers.

The film of the same name starring Peter O'Toole, Omar Shariff and Juliette Greco is also great fun.

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### **Greg Dill says**

Couldn't quite finish the book only because I became rather bored with it. Tad bit slow going. Interesting beginning with the discovery of the mysterious death of a Polish woman. Three German generals were seriously being looked at from the investigators. But then suddenly the book turns to a completely different subject about a German soldier who survived an attack by Russians. Lots of dialog in the book and minimal action. If you like detailed books like Clancy and WEB Griffin then you might like this. Otherwise, don't waste your time and rent the 1960s movie version.

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### **Impoeia says**

Most of the characters - the generals specifically - appear nothing more than 2 dimensional representations of what the author believes a general in Nazi Germany should be. Specifically, a general who still represents all the values and virtues of a bygone age, forced to work in a dishonourable system. The main message seems to be: duty above all else, and do your best with the rest and everything will come out alright. The characters in this story certainly seemed to have prospered, despite their failings and cowardice.

That, at least comes to close to what one might call the moral of the story, though it's a rather weak one. It might have been better, had the characters more substance, but they fail to carry the author's message to the point where I, as a reader, could not figure out what that message was supposed to be. Throughout the book, I was haunted by the feeling that the author was trying to tell me something, and I would come upon his meaning in the next chapter.....but the expectation was never fulfilled.

The only interesting character was the one we saw the least of, and of whom the author chose to reveal the least. Perhaps that is the main point of his interest for the reader - the mystery.

Overall, not a book I need to revisit.

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### **Bibliophile says**

It's 1942 in Warsaw, and a Polish woman is found brutally murdered and mutilated; an eyewitness places a German general at the scene of the crime. A similar crime occurs in Paris in 1944. But which of the three generals who were present in both cities at the right times is the guilty party? Will the dedicated German Colonel Grau and his counterpart, the French Inspector Prévert be able to find out who the killer is, and once they do, will they be able to bring a German general to justice in Occupied Paris? That's the hook for Hans Hellmut Kirst's *The Night of the Generals* (which was later made into a film starring Peter O'Toole, and

highly improbably, Omar Sharif as Colonel Grau).

The problem is that *The Night of the Generals* can't decide whether it wants to be a murder mystery about a serial-killer (whose identity is fairly obvious about 30 pages into the novel and is confirmed halfway through); or a satire of mid-century German attitudes towards war, generals, and the army; or an impassioned cry of anger about those same attitudes. And the novel suffers from this lack of a firm identity; most of the characters are paper-thin stereotypes, rather than actual people and the plot is ridiculously full of holes (such as the motivation for the serial-killer, which is touched upon in one sentence and which is never referenced again.)

If you're interested in a near-contemporary German writers' take on his country's troubled history, and on the more mundane aspects of being a common soldier in the German army, then this is a fairly entertaining book. But my 1967 edition has blurbs that compare it to *Crime and Punishment* (hahahah!) and *The Spy Who Came In from the Cold*, which are beyond ridiculous. (Although it's nice to know that over-inflated blurbing isn't just a recent phenomenon!!)

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### **Andrew says**

I must say I'm not a great fan of military fiction - a portion of my brain shuts off when I hear military titles and the same goes for politics - but whilst such matters provide the background for this book the thrust is really the characterisation and the three murders. The book moves easily from character to character, including sections which are reports, recorded conversations, and other interludes; whilst there is a linear narrative, it also feels as though the reader is piecing together the plot at the same time as the author, which makes for an overall interesting read. Perhaps greater knowledge of the historical events of the time which are woven into the book might have enhanced my reading experience, but I'd recommend this book with reservations to those who enjoyed a crime but might not be too interested in political/military fiction.

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### **Bruce says**

*The Night of the Generals* takes place in occupied France during World War II, and is a deftly written, highly suspenseful detective story centered around one of the most fascinating of crimes: a murderer using war as a cover. The suspects are winnowed down to three high-ranking German generals, two of whom are involved in a conspiracy to dethrone Hitler. The interweaving of these two plots is handled masterfully, and the suspense is given substance by the burning ethical questions which inevitably loom: Was the dilemma of soldiers under Hitler as clear-cut as it seems from our vantage point? Would I have acted differently?

Kirst was himself a Nazi soldier, and is very bitter about the deception perpetrated on the military by Hitler. He provides many trenchant observations and some very effective satire, making this a good historical novel as well.

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### **Olethros says**

-Lograda en dos aspectos simultáneos, casi en tres.-

Género. Novela.

Lo que nos cuenta. En el libro *La noche de los generales* (publicación original: *Der Nacht der Generalen*, 1962) nos trasladamos hasta 1942, a la Varsovia ocupada por Alemania durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial, el hallazgo del cadáver de una prostituta inicia una investigación por parte del comandante Grau, jefe de la sección de contraespionaje alemana en la ciudad. Un testigo da una serie de datos que indican que pudo ser un general alemán a quién vio abandonar la escena del crimen. Las pesquisas de Grau descubren que sólo tres generales no tienen coartada.

¿Quiere saber más de este libro, sin spoilers? Visite:

<http://librosdeolethros.blogspot.com/...>

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### **Jamie says**

Adeptly drawn characters, exceptional plot, fascinating commentary of the times. Hilarious page-turner, with very serious undertones.

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### **John Winterson says**

This book is based on a brilliant concept – the absurdity of a man obsessed with investigating a single murder case in the midst of mass murder as the Third Reich begins to collapse.

It is almost inevitable that the book falls short of the idea. National Socialism is itself such an absurdity – a tragic and obscene absurdity but still an absurdity – that satire becomes redundant.

In any case, Kirst does not seem to have made up his mind whether he was writing a satire or a crime thriller, so the book succeeds as neither. He is at his weakest when trying to be profound, putting philosophical speeches in the mouths of his characters and even sometimes in the narrative. Although these sometimes contain good points, it would perhaps have been better if Kirst had let the reader work them out for himself rather than hit him over the head with them.

There is also a lack of self-perception in the way that Kirst invites us to condemn the narrow-mindedness of Germans under National Socialism and, more subtly, in the days of the Post-War 'economic miracle' without questioning his own bias. In judging others for their failure to examine the norms of their time and place, he lays down moral absolutes with a high hand, blind to the fact that he is guilty of the same sin. Having been a serving officer in the War and, apparently, a Party member himself, he is eager to stress that he is not like most of the characters he portrays, and in doing so falls into the 'them' and 'us' mentality that was at the root of National Socialism.

So he makes his hero a politically aware officer of the Abwehr – the military intelligence department that provided a refuge for many opponents of Hitler – rather than a simple policeman doing his job under impossible circumstances, which might have been more effective. Colonel Grau is in no doubt about the immorality of the State he serves – even if, hypocritically, he continues to serve it in a position of rank and influence – so we never get to consider properly the more difficult ethical question of the extent to which an

apolitical functionary should obey and serve an immoral government.

None of this detracts from the entertainment value of the book, which is considerable, but Kirst appears to have been aspiring to something higher and he fails in that. There is a truly great novel to be written on how National Socialism succeeded in normalising itself, so that millions of perfectly decent Germans co-operated with it. The paradox is that perhaps such a book could only be written by someone of Kirst's generation, who experienced it first hand, but they are the people most unwilling to admit that they were themselves the 'normal' people in question.

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## **Randal says**

An OK book. Too predictable to be considered a thriller. Some parts were well done -- bringing in "documentation" to provide a variety of points of view. On the other hand, some really self-important blather about the Importance of Generals.

Belongs in the past, like WWII movies from the 1960s on the late show.

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