

# 《(德意志第三帝国的诞生) COMING OF THE THIRD REICH, THE》

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## 内容简介

There is a certain way of writing about German history, and especially about Nazism, that is characteristically British. Soon after the demise of Adolf Hitler's "one-thousand-year Reich," such historians as A.J.P. Taylor, John Wheeler-Bennett, Hugh Trevor-Roper and Alan Bullock wrote influential accounts of the course of German history, the nemesis of Prussian militarism and the nature of Nazi tyranny. Aimed at scholars and the general public, these often elegantly written books avoided excessive footnotes, synthesized and generalized complex events and eschewed both high-flown rhetoric and convoluted interpretations.

By perceiving the Third Reich through their own rationalist and empiricist prism, though, British historians gave short shrift to the ideological fanaticism that was an inherent part of Nazism. It was impossible for them to believe that any more than a handful of extremists would have either taken Hitler's rhetoric seriously or willingly perpetrated the crimes he ordered. For some, not even Hitler himself could have meant what he preached. Rather, he was depicted as an especially ruthless but otherwise quite "normal" dictator whose main goal was to seize and hold on to power. There is a certain way of writing about German history, and especially about Nazism, that is characteristically British. Soon after the demise of Adolf Hitler's "one-thousand-year Reich," such historians as A.J.P. Taylor, John Wheeler-Bennett, Hugh Trevor-Roper and Alan Bullock wrote influential accounts of the course of German history, the nemesis of Prussian militarism and the nature of Nazi tyranny. Aimed at scholars and the general public, these often elegantly written books avoided excessive footnotes, synthesized and generalized complex events and eschewed both high-flown rhetoric and convoluted interpretations. By perceiving the Third Reich through their own rationalist and empiricist prism, though, British historians gave short shrift to the ideological fanaticism that was an inherent part of Nazism. It was impossible for them to believe that any more than a handful of extremists would have either taken Hitler's rhetoric seriously or willingly perpetrated the crimes he ordered. For some, not even Hitler himself could have meant what he preached. Rather, he was depicted as an especially ruthless but otherwise quite "normal" dictator whose main goal was to seize and hold on to power. In the intervening decades, numerous studies have added greatly to our understanding of support and opposition to Nazism, the destruction of the Weimar Republic, the function of Hitler as leader of party and state and the role of ideological conviction and indoctrination. Indeed, so much detailed scholarship has been produced that it seemed appropriate to write an updated synthesis that would provide an overview of a regime for which the public's fascination has hardly diminished. Richard Evans, a prolific British social historian of Germany, has applied his considerable energies to this task. *The Coming of the Third Reich* is the first of a projected three-volume study intended to provide the definitive general history of Nazi Germany for the next generation. Curiously, the British historian Michael Burleigh did just that four years ago. But his massive study, *The Third Reich: A New History*, presented Nazism as a political religion that took hold of the German population and manifested itself as a cult of violence and destruction. In contrast, Evans depicts the rise to power of a manipulative, power-greedy and violent political party that exploited the dire circumstances of the time to establish a dictatorship over a nation that never fully embraced Nazi rule and ideology. *The Coming of the Third Reich*

thus returns to older interpretations of the origins of Hitler's rise. For Evans, Hitler "seems to have regarded the conquest of power as the essence of the Nazi Revolution." While he concedes that "the Nazis not only seized political power, they also seized ideological and cultural power" and notes that their "ideas appealed directly to . . . the German educated elite," Evans has little to say about the Nazis' ideas beyond stating that "what mattered to them above all was race, culture, and ideology." Though well-written and accessible, the narrative has some notable shortcomings. For example, Evans argues that while the rise of Nazism was not predetermined, its origins can be traced to Bismarck's imperial Germany. But even as he vividly describes the emergence of radical anti-Semitism in the late 19th century, he neglects to analyze the political structure of the empire, whose deficiencies contributed greatly to the failure of democracy in the Weimar Republic. Similarly, while he rightly stresses the centrality of World War I to the rise of Nazism, Evans devotes very little space to the war itself. Nor does the German revolution of 1918 feature prominently, although it was the specific origin of political extremism in that country and imbued the German bourgeoisie with intense fear of social upheaval, both of which contributed to the Nazis' subsequent success. Finally, Evans has remarkably little to say on the expansion of anti-Semitism in the 1920s and tends to relegate the Nazi Party's rabid anti-Jewish rhetoric and violence to a secondary role. Most troublesome is the contradiction between the author's central contention that the rise of Nazism was not inevitable and his simultaneous assertion that the republic was doomed from the start. "In writing this book I have tried to remind the reader repeatedly that things could easily have turned out very differently," Evans writes in the introduction -- only to later ask, in analyzing the fall of the Weimar Republic, "Where the law and its administrators were against it, what chance did it have?" He might have avoided this by focusing on the intrigues by the presidential "camarilla," the army, big business and the conservative elites, which eventually led to Hitler's appointment as chancellor. But here, too, the narrative flows too quickly, with the result of making the outcome appear all but unavoidable. Evans has accomplished his goal of writing a readable account of the origins of the Third Reich from the unification of Germany in 1871 to the establishment of the Nazi regime in 1933. He provides many insights into the political culture of imperial and Weimar Germany, the mentality of the Nazi storm troopers and the impacts of the inflation of the early 1920s and the depression and unemployment of the early 1930s. But the book often skimps precisely on the themes it recognizes as crucial and weaves a plot that contradicts its central thesis. Most important, perhaps, it fails to explain the sense of rapture that seized the rapidly growing numbers of Germans associated with the "movement." Combining worship of the Führer, the nation and the Aryan race with extreme violence, racism and anti-Semitism, the "spirit" that imbued Hitler's followers penetrated far and wide into German society. By 1933 an evil but potent wind was blowing in Germany; within a few years it would wreak destruction throughout Europe.

作者简介：  
RICHARD J. EVANS was educated at Oxford, has taught at Columbia and the University of London, and is currently the Professor of Modern History at Cambridge. His books include *Death in Hamburg* (winner of the Wolfson Literary Award for History), *In Hitler's Shadow, Rituals of Retribution* (winner of the Fraenkel Prize in Contemporary History), *In Defense of History*, and *Living About Hitler*.

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