

# Books

## The rewards of mass murder

*The Splendid Blond Beast: Money, Law, and Genocide in the 20th Century.* By Christopher Simpson. Grove Press, New York, 1993. 399 pgs. \$24.95.

By MATTHEW BUDMAN

**I**N THE UNITED STATES we tend to treat the Holocaust as a onetime event of insanity, committed by overwrought Germans under the spell of Hitler's charisma. The Nazis, the story goes, were stopped by brave Americans who were sent to liberate Auschwitz and bring war criminals to justice as soon as we learned of the concentration camps.

The reality is quite different. We knew about the ongoing slaughter. We had every opportunity to bring Nazis to justice. We possessed documentation of German businessmen's crimes.

The United States acted only when public pressure left it no choice.

Christopher Simpson's "The Splendid Blond Beast" details U.S. government and German business complicity in the slaughter of 6 million Jews. It's a damning book, one that will shake even a patriot's faith in our government and give pause to anyone driving a Mercedes or Volkswagen.

Author of "Blowback: America's Recruitment of Nazis and Its Effects on the Cold War," Simpson here "traces the roots of mass murder as an instrument of state power."

"The Splendid Blond Beast" describes a world in which economics overshadows morality, in which governments charged with punishing the perpetrators of genocide opt "to

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Christopher Simpson

forget, to compromise and to walk away from injustice."

Simpson argues that the Gestapo and SS could not have successfully carried out their plans of mass murder without the participation of the entire German business community, which uncomplainingly divested Jews of their property and wealth. "Put bluntly," he writes, "the Nazis succeeded in genocide in part through offering bystanders money, property, status and other rewards for their active or tacit complicity in the crime."

"Germany's private sector served as the main instrument of persecution through economic boycotts, dismissal of Jews from the professions, Aryanizations [seizures] of Jewish property, and discrimination against Jews in wages, prices and access to goods," he continues.

"Later, German industry often led the way in exploitation of concentration camp labor and systematic rape of occupied countries. By the end of the war, virtually all of America's most important German trading partners from the 1920s and 1930s were to have blood under their fingernails."

Far more chilling, and less easily explained, is the U.S. response to reports of mass slaughter. Most officials in the State Department, as well as in the British Foreign Office, were terrified of a German economic collapse, from which they were certain a revolution disastrous for U.S. business

interests would result. So they attempted to discredit witnesses to the carnage and even dismissed talk of postwar war-crimes trials. A foreign government could do as it pleased with its own citizens, their reasoning went.

After photos from the concentration camps made it impracticable for the White House to deny the ongoing slaughter, strident anti-Nazi pronouncements issued forth, but little action was taken.

"There was a deadly chasm between the Allies' public condemnation of Nazi crimes ... and their frequent failure to rescue Jews from Hitler, the deeds that seemingly would be a logical consequence of their declarations," Simpson writes.

After the war, the United States worked to shield the German business elite from prosecution and CIA chief Allen Dulles "guaranteed de facto asylum to Karl Wolff, the highest-ranking SS officer to survive the war, and to a collection of Wolff's most senior aides."

"Regardless of how one views the U.S. decision to step back from prosecution of the German economic elite," Simpson writes, "it is evident that the U.S. policy necessarily entailed an amnesty for much of what German business had done during the Holocaust."

Extensively researched and annotated, the 399-page book also purports to cover the Turks' World War I genocidal campaign against the Armenians, but spends relatively little space on that tragedy, which sounds all too familiar.

Simpson refuses to accept conspiratorial analyses and notes that capitalism and governments are not inherently evil. "It is individual human beings who make the day-to-day decisions that create genocide, reward mass murder and ease the escape of the guilty," he writes. "But social systems usually protect these individuals from responsibility for 'authorized' acts, in part by providing rationalizations that present systemic brutality as a necessary evil."

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