

# **Book Review: Nuremberg Diary**

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Nuremberg Diary. By *G. M. Gilbert*. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Company, 1947.)

Scientific reporting is extremely difficult and this volume, a day-by-day running account of the expressed opinions of the major Nazi war criminals, is an attempt to report their psychological structures in diary form. It achieves its fundamental aim but suffers in that the major characters may well be almost unknown to many of its readers. This is not an intended criticism of the volume but rather a criticism of the lack of interest of the average American in the individualities who precipitated the world into the recent holocaust of war.

To anyone knowing the criminals and their history, the book is most interesting and from it considerable information concerning the personality makeup of these particular Nazis can be gained. The author's opportunities for observations were unlimited, and the diary is of value historically as well as psychologically.

Fortunately, the volume is primarily a summary of the various statements of the prisoners, both to each other and to the observer, put down in most cases nearly verbatim. The author states, "I refrained from embroidering the data with too much psychological speculation, leaving that to later collaborative studies which would be more comprehensive and objective than my own immediate reactions could possibly be." Such an attitude is most commendable and, as a result, this book represents a source of information concerning these individuals which should prove of considerable research value. The author occasionally introjects his own interpretive concepts and at times is forced through lack of space to make some selection of his material. Naturally, this colors, to some degree, the over-all picture of the individuals concerned, but for the most part the portrayal of each character is adequate and essentially accurate.

The book serves a useful purpose since it demonstrates the interplay of the various personalities concerned in a special situation. It cannot be overemphasized, of course, that all observations of these individuals after their incarceration at Nuremberg must be considered as studies limited by the fact that each captive Nazi was held under the shadow of death as a war criminal. Obviously, this environmental situation produced a varied series of reaction patterns, in some instances undoubtedly different from the precaptive personality expression. If this consideration is borne in mind, the personalities of the various Nazi leaders become more understandable and the various jealousies, attitudes, and reaction patterns become more realistic. This, then, is a specialized report dealing with a special phase in the lives of the men considered as the major leaders of the Nazi party. It represents a set of reaction patterns of the Nazi virus in captivity. By itself the volume is interesting reading. In connection with documents of the trial, together with life histories of the individuals concerned, it completes a gap which should prove of value in future socio-psychological consideration of these most infamous men.

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