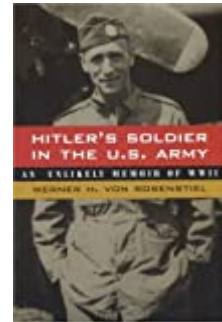




**Werner H. von Rosenstiel.** *Hitler's Soldier in the U.S. Army: An Unlikely Memoir of WWII.* Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2006. xxi + 294 pp. \$22.50 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8173-5288-2.



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## Shades of Today

Werner von Rosenstiel's memoir is not an unlikely one at all.[1] On the contrary, his experiences as a German "enemy alien" living in the United States during World War II were quite typical. He left his homeland under a pretense and arrived in the United States with no intention to return. To avoid deportation and gain permanent resident status and a work permit, he married his college girlfriend, an American citizen. As expected, the authorities noticed and tried to prove that he was a spy. They put him on trial and failed. Aliens from other European countries, most notably Italians, shared similar fates. Of course, Japanese and Japanese-Americans fared the worst, not even being afforded the luxury of a trial. Furious after the attack on Pearl Harbor and deeply xenophobic, the U.S. government lashed out against persons of Japanese ancestry. Declaring them dangerous to the nation's security, it ordered over 100,000 removed from their homes along the West Coast and relocated to specially constructed internment camps farther inland. Today, the United States is at war again. The catalyst for this war was once again a devastating attack on U.S. soil on September 11, 2001, perpetrated by nineteen Middle Easterners, all Muslims, all Arabs. While the U.S. govern-

ment refrained from drastic actions similar to those taken in World War II and has even appealed to its citizens not to see a terrorist in every Arab or Muslim, the feeling of unease remains. In this sense, von Rosenstiel's memoirs speak to and express the feelings, anxieties, frustrations and hopes of persons throughout history caught on the "wrong" side of a war.

The title of the book is not, however, entirely an editor's gimmick. In September and October 1938, von Rosenstiel indeed served in the German Army and received military training, which made him Hitler's soldier. During a year as an exchange student at the University of Cincinnati, he reached proficiency in the English language and gained extensive knowledge of the United States. Both made him a valuable asset to the regime. It was also this language facility that provided him with a plausible reason for taking a refresher trip to America before assuming his position in the bureaucracy. The regime allowed him to go because, as a graduate of the legal faculty of one of Germany's most prestigious universities he could look ahead to a bright and secure future in Hitler's Germany; thus, he was seen as an unlikely em-