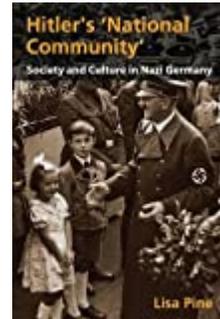




Lisa Pine. *"Hitler's National Community": Society and Culture in Nazi Germany.* London: Hodder Arnold, 2007. x + 262 pp. \$29.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-340-88846-9.



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Did the Nazis Succeed in Building a National Community?

In her new book on society and culture in National Socialist Germany, Lisa Pine provides a new synthesis of both the latest empirical findings and historiographical debates. As the first such attempt since the 1990s, despite some significant weaknesses, it is most welcome. Pine seeks to provide both a top-down and bottom-up view of Nazi German society, incorporating discussions of both Nazi policy and popular reaction. Her primary organizational and analytical methodology is to divide German society between those within and without the "national community" (*Volksgemeinschaft*), a word in wide usage during the Third Reich.

The first part of Pine's book deals with those within the national community, discussing the attempt to create consensus and conformity through coercion, education, and propaganda. Emphasizing recent research, Pine devotes chapters to Nazi youth organizations, women and the family, the churches, and the German military and the churches. The discussions of women, youth, and the family are particularly good, providing valuable insight into relatively new and important areas of research. The second part of the book deals with "outsiders": Jews and

political opponents, "gypsies," the "asocial" and disabled, homosexuals, prostitutes, and Jehovah's Witnesses. The six latter groups, again, reflect an emphasis in more recent historiography that was lacking in previous syntheses of the literature. The final part of the book deals with "culture": radio, press, cinema, theater, art, architecture, music, and literature. In this section, Pine continues to follow her basic organizing principle by delineating between the cultural works accepted and rejected by the "national community."

Pine has created a very impressive compilation and overview of the latest historiography of society and culture in Nazi Germany, and it will serve as a highly valuable resource in this regard. Those seeking a critical understanding of Nazi culture and society, however, must look elsewhere. Pine's book does not attempt to render a cohesive analysis of social and cultural life in the Third Reich. The book demonstrates throughout, in accurate representation of the historiographical consensus, that the Third Reich period witnessed massive compliance by Germans with Nazi policies and minimal overt dissent. But Pine also repeatedly emphasizes that the

Nazi leadership was unable to gain unconditional support for most of its social and cultural policies, and that the regime often failed to live up to its promises. The book notes, for example, the regime's failure to provide German workers with a significantly greater degree of power within the Nazi "national community" than they had before the Third Reich. Other examples include dissatisfaction among young persons with Nazi youth organizations and efforts by Germans throughout the period to continue listening to "degenerate music." However, Pine does not attempt to contextualize these phenomena and thus leaves the reader unclear of the extent, if any, to which they were important in the shaping of society during the Third Reich. Ultimately, it remains unclear from the book the degree to which Germans were either satisfied or dissatisfied with Nazi social and cultural policy, and why.

This lack of critical analysis is most apparent in relation to Pine's treatment of racism and antisemitism in Nazi Germany. Again, her book reflects the historiographical consensus that these phenomena infiltrated almost every aspect of German society and culture during the Third Reich. But fundamental questions are not raised. Did, for example, the regime's promotion of

racism encourage German support, discourage support, or was this permeation of racism and antisemitism into virtually all of German social and cultural life important only to obsessive ideologues within the NSDAP itself? Lack of analysis in this regard is reflected in Pine's use of the words "race" and "racial purity" throughout the book: sometimes they are in quotation marks, other times not. This typography is confusing because it leaves the reader unclear as to the degree one should view such concepts as being grounded within, or held from outside the Nazi perspective. In large part, the fault for this lack of critical examination lies in Pine's sources: the greater historiography of Nazi Germany. To the present, few works have sought to ascertain what Germans in the Third Reich understood by the word "race," and how they felt about such conceptions as "racial superiority" and "racial purity." Given, however, that the main theme of Pine's work "is the creation of identity in Nazi Germany" (p. 2), the lack of analysis regarding the core idea used by the Nazi regime to attempt to shape conceptions of identity in the Third Reich appears as a significant gap.

The foregoing critiques should not detract, however, from the valuable aspects of Pine's work. It is a most welcome addition to the literature.

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