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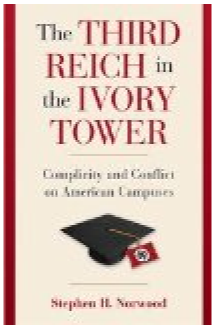
Stephen H. Norwood. *The Third Reich in the Ivory Tower: Complicity and Conflict on American Campuses.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. 339 pp. $29.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-521-76243-4.


The THIRD REICH in the IVORY TOWER
Complicity and Conflict on American Campuses
Stephen H. Norwood

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Collusion, Compromise and Confrontation: American Universities and the Third Reich

To students and scholars concerned with diplomatic history, the name William Langer will call to mind a generation of scholar-diplomats who penned grand studies of diplomacy and world history before moving effortlessly into the corridors of power as diplomats, intelligence analysts, occupation officials, or advisers to high-level policymakers. The son of poor German immigrants and a veteran of the First World War, Langer taught at Clark and Harvard Universities before volunteering to head the Office of Strategic Service's Research and Analysis Branch during World War II. After the war, he played a minor role in the birth of the Central Intelligence Agency and advised a succession of postwar presidents on intelligence matters while teaching at Harvard. He titled his memoirs, appropriately enough, *In and Out of the Ivory Tower.*[1]

In his study of the reception of Nazi Germany (including regime officials) at elite American campuses in the 1930s, Stephen Norwood calls attention to a rather less heroic moment in Langer's career. Writing in the *Harvard Crimson* in March 1936, Langer defended Germany's recent reoccupation of the Rhineland. For Norwood, Langer belongs to a depressingly large number of scholars and academic leaders who downplayed or ignored Nazi violence, refused to do much to aid its victims, squelched anti-Nazi protests on their own campuses, and lent their scholarly talents and reputations to the regime's diplomatic efforts to present itself as a "normal," peace-seeking nation interested in redressing the injustices of a punitive peace treaty. Norwood's book serves as a necessary counterpart to the many studies of how British and American universities aided refugee scholars and students. He bases most of the research on university archives and particularly university-sponsored publications like the *Crimson. The Third Reich in the Ivory Tower* should inspire scholars and students to explore the pasts of other institutions in the morally and politically compromised years of the 1930s.

Langer's reputation emerges from Norwood's study only slightly bruised. It is university presidents like Harvard's James Conant and Columbia's Nicholas Murray Butler who undergo particularly harsh scrutiny, as do the administrations and faculty (and at least some students) at the Seven Sisters colleges, the University of Virginia's prestigious Institute of Public Affairs, a variety of German departments, and prominent American Catholic universities. Conant, for instance, played host to a number of regime officials, such as Harvard alum Ernst Hanfstaengel and Germany's ambassador to the United States, Hans Luther, and insisted on sending a representative to a Nazi Party propaganda spectacle celebrating the 550th anniversary of Heidelberg University's founding. Norwood portrays Butler as an anti-Semitic admirer of fascism (particularly the Italian variety) who remained blind to the oppressive natures of Benito Mussolini's and Adolf Hitler's regimes. Like Conant, Butler dispatched a faculty member to the Heidelberg celebration, though relented, reluctantly, to pressures from within and without his university and declined to send a representative to a similar affair at Goettingen the following year. One of the strengths of Norwood's book is that he reminds the reader constantly of the presence of strident anti-Nazi voices both popular and academic–voices that men like Conant and Butler disregarded or suppressed whenever they could.

The middle chapters of Norwood's book take aim at the Seven Sisters colleges, the University of Virginia's Institute of Public Affairs, departments of German language and literature, and Catholic universities like Fordham. As with Conant's and Butler's actions (or lack of them), Norwood concludes that student exchanges and debates on foreign policy sponsored by the Seven Sisters and the University of Virginia, respectively, furthered the Nazi regime's aims. As for German departments, which Norwood labels "Nazi nests," they were infested with outright pro-Nazis and attempted to instill their students with pro-regime attitudes. Here more research is needed on the attitudes of American Germanists and their students, as Norwood over-generalizes from one case at Rutgers' New Jersey College for Women to "American universities during the 1930s" (p. 193). The author is more attuned to complexity in his assessment of Catholic universities, where admiration for Francisco Franco, Mussolini, and Hitler coexisted uneasily with concerns about the Church's autonomy in Italy and Germany.

Much of the book reads like an indictment fueled by moral outrage. "It is truly shameful," Norwood concludes about Harvard, "that the administrative, alumni, and student leaders of America's most prominent university, who were in a position to influence American opinion at a crucial time, remained indifferent to Germany's terrorist campaign against the Jews and instead on many occasions assisted the Nazis in their efforts to gain acceptance in the West" (pp. 73-74). There is indeed much to be ashamed of, though as Norwood also makes clear, much to admire. To cite just two examples–hundreds of students and faculty took principled stands against their institution's decisions to welcome Nazi dignitaries to their campuses, and students at Yale, Princeton, and Williams attempted to raise funds to buy imperiled "Jewish" and "non-Aryan" books in the Austrian National Library.

But the outrage comes at the expense of a more balanced and in-depth analysis. To return to the example of William Langer: Is it really fair to lump Langer on the basis of one *Crimson* essay alongside the odious Harvard Law School dean Roscoe Pound, who accepted an honorary degree from the University of Berlin and proclaimed to the New York *Herald Tribune* upon returning from Germany that Jews and Jewish scholars were not being persecuted there? Langer's position on the Rhineland reoccupation may have been informed at least in part by his own family background and his particular take on the reverberations of the post-World War I settlement rather than a nefarious intention to seduce vulnerable minds on Wilhelmstrasse's behalf. Pound clearly allowed himself to be used and joins a long list of similarly pathetic dupes-for-dictators, from Walter Duranty to Julie Kristeva to Sean Penn. Yet like the legions of western intellectuals and celebrities who championed nonexistent workers' and peasants' paradises while real workers and peasants languished in gulags or starved to death, men like Pound brought dissatisfactions and resentments about their own societies–be it "too many" Jews in the academy or a conviction that the United States must remain neutral as Germany once again upended the balance of power in Europe–to their encounters with Nazi Germany. A fuller assessment of the complexities of these encounters and the need to situate them in a longer transnational history of the western intellectual's propensity to embrace tyranny would complicate Norwood's rather one-dimensional portraits.

And what of the significance of someone like Pound's activities and statements for Germany's foreign policy in the mid-1930s? Without question, Langer, Conant, Butler, Pound, and others occupied positions of authority and influence. It would have been useful for the author to situate his findings in the context of work by Philipp Gassert and other scholars who have studied the Nazi regime's diplomatic outreach to the United States and Great Britain in the mid-1930s.[2] Conversely, it might have been productive to pose a counterfactual question with regard to the impact of the events described by the author on the short- and longer-term course of American attitudes toward neutrality, Germany, Jews, and even the role of academic culture in influencing domestic politics and diplomacy. Had William Langer, along with the leadership of Harvard, Columbia, the Seven Sisters, the University of Virginia, and most German departments all aligned themselves with the heroes of Norwood's study–the Jewish and non-Jewish students and "working-class" protesters who pressured their institution's administrations and faculties to take a stand against the Nazi regime's brutality and cynical attempts to manipulate public opinion–would American isolation not have remained so stubbornly entrenched?

Counterfactual questions, of course, cannot be answered. One cannot escape the conclusion, however, that at the very least some of most influential American universities would not have damaged their reputations by acquiescing in the Nazi regime's efforts to court friendly public opinion. For calling attention to this history of acquiescence, Stephen Norwood's study opens a much-needed chapter on the history of the American-German transatlantic encounter and invites a broader and deeper investigation of the problems raised throughout the book.

Notes

[1]. (New York: N. Watson Academic Publications, 1977). See also Carl Schorske's appreciation of Langer's career in *The American Historical Review* 83, no. 4 (October, 1978).

[2]. Phillipp Gassert, *Amerika im Dritten Reich. Ideologie, Propaganda, und Volksmeinung, 1933-1945* (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 1997).

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