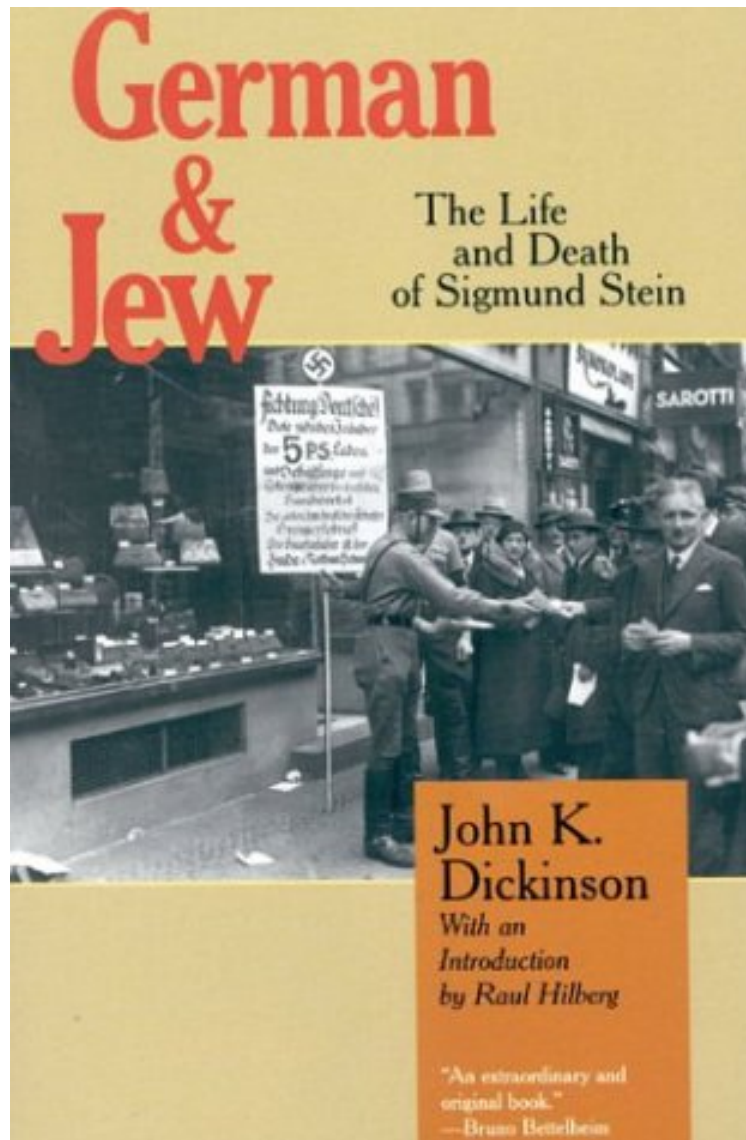


[Free and download] German and Jew: The Life and Death of Sigmund Stein

German and Jew: The Life and Death of Sigmund Stein

John K. Dickinson

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John K. Dickinson : German and Jew: The Life and Death of Sigmund Stein before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised German and Jew: The Life and Death of Sigmund Stein:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Tragic End to a LifeBy Linda BrooksGerman Jew, by John K. Dickinson, is the tragic story of one man caught up in the wave of Nazi madness in Germany. The book, written in 1967, used pseudonyms for all major characters; however, a new preface to the book published in 2001 lists the actual names of all the characters. Hermann Reis was a Jew born in 1896 in the small town of Marburg, Germany. His father

was a cattle merchant, a profitable occupation but almost solely limited to Jews because of the draconian German traditions of occupational divisions between Christians (respectable professions) and Jews (occupations generally unworthy of Christians). Through hard work and dedication, Hermann became an attorney, entered into practice with another German Jew, Willy Wertheim, moved to the nearby village of Hochburg, married and had a daughter. He became increasingly more successful in his law practice and was able to move into nicer and nicer apartments. He led a comfortable and typically bourgeois lifestyle. Reis's participation in Judaism was mostly limited to holiday observances and he did not adhere to strict kosher dietary guidelines. First and foremost, he considered himself a German and fought for Germany in the First World War. His politics were generally liberal and democratic, but he was not particularly active in the various organizations that had formed. When the Nazis first came into power, Reis, like many other Germans, both Jewish and Christian, thought the party would eventually burn itself out once it came into power. The book describes in detail the somewhat labyrinthine methods Hitler used to gain his total control over German. Soon after the Nazis came into power, they began a gradual but systematic oppression of the Jews by limiting their participation in ordinary German life. There were restrictions on what professions they could practice and on their personal relationships with "Aryans". Under these restrictions, Hermann Reis was first prohibited from having non-Jewish clients, and then was forbidden to practice as an attorney; he was, however, able to practice as a "legal adviser", but only to Jews. A considerable amount of his practice at this time consisted of financial and practical advice to Jews who saw the writing on the wall and were emigrating to other countries. Although Reis's wife wanted badly to leave Germany, Hermann was reluctant to do so, for several reasons. The primary reason was that he loved this country in general and his town in particular. Additionally, he felt that if he left, he would be abandoning the Jews who needed his help in their emigration plans. His brother left Germany in 1938, and as of the writing of the book, was still living in the U.S., but Hermann refused to go. As the years went on, deportations of Jews began, and more and more horrendous rumors spread about their fate. By 1941, Reis had become the leader of the Jewish community in his village, and was their liaison with both the local police and the local SS. This is not to say that he in any way collaborated with the Nazis - his main focus was to provide aid and protection to his fellow Jews. In 1941 and 1942, he began plans to leave Germany with his family, but by that time, he was unable to obtain the necessary papers and was forced to stay. His situation worsened and he was forced to supply names to the SS for deportation; this was an extremely painful process for him. His relations with his wife's family deteriorated when he refused to take his sister-in-law's name off the deportation list, but later removed his own daughter's name. By the end of 1942, there were fewer than 100 Jews left in Hochburg and they had all been concentrated in one small area. Since there were so few Jews left, Reis and his family were deported in September, 1942, to Theresienstadt, which was a concentration camp but not an outright death camp. There, Hermann took part in various work details and seems to have chosen ones that provided a little extra food and the opportunity to see his wife and daughter more often. The family spent two years at Theresienstadt before being transported to Gollerschau, a satellite camp of Auschwitz. Gollerschau was a work camp, primarily limestone quarries, and death was almost a certainty. The exact date of Hermann Reis's death in Gollerschau is unknown, but it is fairly certain that he died prior to January, 1945, when the Nazis forced the survivors on a death march to flee the advancing Russian troops. The book is based on numerous interviews with surviving Jews, family members and non-Jewish residents. It delves deeply into the attitudes of the non-Jews toward the Nazi persecution of their Jewish neighbors. There seems to have been very little public outcry at the anti-Jewish laws the Nazis enacted, and while there is some sympathy for the fate of the Jews, there doesn't seem to be much emotional involvement of the non-Jews still living in the area. They remember Hermann Reis with general respect and liking, but they did little to help at the time and some in fact profited by taking valuable items from the Reis family for "safeguarding until after the War". This is an excellent book that explores in fascinating detail not only the gradual and insidious rise to power of the Nazi party and all the horrors that entailed, but it is also a powerful and tragic story of one man and his ultimate betrayal by the country he loved so much.

Sigmund Stein was a prominent lawyer in the town of Hochburg, a German with deep roots in rural Germany. When fellow Jews urged Stein to leave Germany in the 1930s and after, he refused, arguing that he could best serve his people by acting as a buffer between the Jewish community and the Nazis. From 1933 to 1944 he was methodically stripped of his rights as a citizen and his dignity as a human being. The torment of his Jewish heritage and his proud German upbringing the divided loyalty of a lifetime was finally resolved in Auschwitz. Published in association with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. "An extraordinary and original book. This is the compelling biography of a man who lived during an incredibly complex period of history a typical 'little man' who happened to be Jewish, always trying to take the easy way out, who walked to his doom small step by small step. This is the first single biographical account of a fairly assimilated German Jew who lived in Germany up to the very end." Bruno Bettelheim. "Dickinson's narration of Stein's tragic life is written with the skill and style of a fine novelist." Choice.

Extraordinary...original...this is the compelling biography of a man who lived during an incredible period of history...a typical man who happened to be Jewish, who walked to his doom small step by small step. (Bruno Bettelheim) About

the AuthorJohn K. Dickinson based his re-creation of Sigmund Stein's life on historical research and interviews with almost two hundred persons who had contact with Stein while he lived. Mr. Dickinson, a former professor of sociology, now lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts.