

Hitler, the Germans, and the Final Solution by Ian Kershaw.
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Yad Vashem, 2008.

In his introduction, Professor Ian Kershaw, a pre-eminent Hitler biographer, explains the genesis of this collection of essays, written over a number of years at different stages of the author's academic career, many of them given as papers at conferences and symposia, and collected together in collaboration with colleagues at Yad Vashem.

The essays are divided into four sections: Hitler and the Final Solution, Popular Opinion and the Jews of Germany, The Final Solution in Historiography and The Uniqueness of Nazism. In the first Kershaw reflects on Hitler as an ideologue and propagandist and considers his role in the Final Solution and the nature of his dictatorship; in the second he considers from a number of different angles the response of German popular opinion to the marginalisation and persecution of the Jews, and then their deportation and extermination – an area of huge controversy in recent years; the third section is devoted to historiographic concerns, and the role played by a number of scholars of the subject in the shaping of views and approaches to the events of the Nazi period; in the final section he considers Nazism as a phenomenon and then concludes with a review of the ways in which violence and conflict shaped the twentieth century, the final three paragraphs of which are a grim and pessimistic reflection on what the 21st century may have in store for us.

Hitler, the Germans and the Final Solution is a fascinating and comprehensive collection of papers by one of the finest historians of the Second World War period and provides a wonderful insight into the way in which his thinking, and that of other scholars has developed in the decades since the war ended.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh