



How Could This Happen: Explaining the Holocaust

Dan McMillan

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) 

How Could This Happen: Explaining the Holocaust

Dan McMillan

How Could This Happen: Explaining the Holocaust Dan McMillan

The Holocaust has long seemed incomprehensible, a monumental crime that beggars our powers of description and explanation. Historians have probed the many sources of this tragedy, but no account has united the various causes into an overarching synthesis that answers the vital question: How was such a nightmare possible in the heart of western civilization?

In *How Could This Happen*, historian Dan McMillan distills the vast body of Holocaust research into a cogent explanation and comprehensive analysis of the genocide's many causes, revealing how a once-progressive society like Germany could have carried out this crime. The Holocaust, he explains, was caused not by one but by a combination of factors—from Germany's failure to become a democracy until 1918, to the widespread acceptance of anti-Semitism and scientific racism, to the effects of World War I, which intensified political divisions within the country and drastically lowered the value of human life in the minds of an entire generation. Masterfully synthesizing the myriad causes that led Germany to disaster, McMillan shows why thousands of Germans carried out the genocide while millions watched, with cold indifference, as it enveloped their homeland.

Persuasive and compelling, *How Could This Happen* explains how a perfect storm of bleak circumstances, malevolent ideas, and damaged personalities unleashed history's most terrifying atrocity.

How Could This Happen: Explaining the Holocaust Details

Date : Published April 8th 2014 by Basic Books

ISBN : 9780465080243

Author : Dan McMillan

Format : Hardcover 288 pages

Genre : History, Nonfiction, World War II, Holocaust, War, Sociology

 [Download How Could This Happen: Explaining the Holocaust ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online How Could This Happen: Explaining the Holocaust ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online How Could This Happen: Explaining the Holocaust Dan McMillan

From Reader Review How Could This Happen: Explaining the Holocaust for online ebook

Lena Rotmensz says

Reading Dr. Dan McMillan's book was truly an eye opener. I've read a lot of books about the Holocaust but none have ever given such a clear explanation of how it really happened and why. The evil events of the 2nd World War did not teach humanity a better behavior. All over the world we still have wars and the atrocities are still the same. We all have to do better. We will all have to try harder. I am the daughter of Holocaust survivors and lived with many terrible and heart wrenching stories told by my parents and their friends. This book should be taught in schools and universities. Dr. McMillan did a wonderful job of explaining the events and teaching us all not to make the same mistakes.

Jerry Harmon says

A thorough examination of the root cause of the Holocaust. McMillan doesn't paint the German people with the broad brush of evil, but doesn't let them off the hook either. He provides a multi-faceted explanation with the lense of a historian, not placing the value judgement of 75 years of history on the perpetrators of the greatest crime against humanity, rather setting up the unique series of events that made it possible. There is hope in the fact that so many factors had to happen at just the right place, and just the right time, which helps us understand that this is not something that 'just happens'. At the same time, it helps us see that human nature is inherently heard like, and the average person, who may be outraged in hindsight, may follow the path of least resistance, even in the face of complete barbarism.

Robert says

Very interesting read and glimpse into what led up to Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party's rise in Germany. It was a combination of deep political division, hatred that was based on a concept called "Darwinian" racism in which the belief is that the strongest race of people does what is necessary to survive and overall dysfunction of a civilization. I chose to read this book to get educate myself about some things about the Holocaust and Nazism. It opened my eyes about a lot of things, notably, it wasn't just "Nazis" who perpetrated this barbaric crime. It was combination of things including the elites or intellectuals of society, who may not have took place firsthand, but was complicit in it. Also, the average citizens who chose to turn a blind eye to what was happening. It also showed me how dangerous propaganda was, whether it is true or not, in the hands of people who have radical and extreme views. What I got out of this is always question the information you're being given. Don't be so quick to accept the negative information about your opponent or people who are different from you without asking yourself why the information is being put out there for people to digest in the first place.

Gregory Barron says

Good book although it doesn't really do anything more to answer the question. Just restates info and opinions

both from then and now. Gives a little history but mostly of pre WWI Germany. I was expecting some history of the Jewish people's settlement in Germany and Europe. And maybe some insight into why it was so easy for the govt to be anti Semitic. Obviously not to place blame on the victims but was there anything about the way they participated (or not participated) in society that made them vulnerable to persecution

Jerry Delaney says

McMillan is very logical, laying out the reasons the Holocaust came about and why, without these special circumstances all working together, it can never happen again. These circumstances include many we've heard before: the punishing aspects of the Treaty of Versailles, a long history of German anti-semitism, the brutality of WWI had desensitized people to suffering and murder. But there are chapters on how the lack of experience with democracy led the German elites to favor dictators.

McMillan believes that the Holocaust is different from other recent genocides because the others had a political reason behind them. The perpetrators didn't stop victims from leaving; they encouraged it. They were only interested in victims within their own borders; they didn't round them up in other countries. In other genocides they wanted to be rid of the other group but they didn't want to exterminate the group.

It is a well-researched book that is easily accessible to the non-scholar. And yet, McMillan still didn't convince me that this couldn't happen again. We know what men are capable of and must always be vigilant.

Carlee says

In school, we were taught that WW2 happened because the Germans were humiliated after WW1 and the Treaty of Versailles. This book delves farther back (before WW1) and pinpoints Germany's late conversion to democracy (i.e., later than England and France) that led up to WW2.

Simone says

There just isn't an answer... and I think that's part of what makes it such an intriguing subject to learn about. It just boggles the mind. It's scary to think that something like this is possible – still possible; call me a cynic but I don't think humanity is immune from a repeat.

Paraphrasing myself from another book review: Institutionalized racism is insidious. What starts off as a guideline (often times misguided) for the alleged benefit of the community can quickly devolve into an us versus them mentality, pitting people against each other and stirring up violence and hatred and intolerance. It scares me how people don't see a slippery slope when it's staring them in the face. Charter of Values in Quebec anyone?

This book presents a lot of interesting ideas of how culture and history mixed over the years to create the

right conditions for the Holocaust, and it does put forward some very plausible causes, but in the end I think it's the ultimate unanswerable question.

Marie says

A very thoughtful and insightful book on an extremely difficult topic.

Jerry Smith says

The Holocaust is a difficult historical event about which to read but we really ought to do so to gain an understanding and be on the lookout to prevent it from happening again. At least that is my view of this monumental crime against humanity. This is interesting because it is an attempt to dig into the events and explain how they could take place in an ostensibly advanced 20th Century society.

I think that McMillan succeeds pretty well in his aims and it is refreshing to see so many strands come together and his steadfast refusal to simply throw up his hands and attribute it to generic evil or worse, events that are simply too enormous to contemplate. We do everyone who perished a disservice to simply give up on the explanations.

So this book attempts to draw the strands of history, WW1, the political rise of antisemitism, Hitler and the Nazis together and it works for me. I understand it better but I would like to return to this book next year and go over it again so that the messages really go in.

Not a long book but well argued and with a nod to the vile assertion that the Holocaust was a ruse and never happened. That is clearly contemptible and is given short shrift here but it is good that it is at least acknowledged. The Holocaust wasn't that long ago - we need to ensure it never happens again and understanding it is essential in that goal.

Katarina says

A one of a kind book, that is truly important and leaves a mark.

The book is incredibly well researched and written. The topic can lead to either very dry or difficult to read texts, but this one flows with simple beauty and truth.

Each chapter takes the reader through a different topic to explain the Holocaust, ranging from a historical overview of German politics, Hitler's history, social background of the time, economic climate, the pulse of other European countries and anti-Semitism in various forms.

I am grateful to the author for writing this book. It stands alone, no other book I've read can touch it.

Mandy says

In this thought-provoking and engaging book, historian Dan McMillan presents a synthesis of Holocaust literature and research to present the reader with a well-structured and clearly written account of an event that still seems incomprehensible. He examines how a whole series of events, circumstances and personalities all conspired to create such an unimaginable scenario. Extremely well-researched and demonstrating an astute and deep knowledge of his subject, McMillan has written an accessible account that offers much to the general reader as well as academics and scholars. This is an important and valuable book that goes a long way towards explaining the Holocaust, although I suspect no one, in the end, will ever really be able to understand just how it could happen.

Erica says

Nicely researched and succinctly written. Adequately illustrates how events that happened before (going back to how Germany was created) Hitler's rise to power attributed to the Holocaust. This is one of those books that everybody should read!

However, I would have enjoyed more of an explanation/statistics (since it sounded too much like conjecture) after the author makes the assertion on pg. 88 that, "before 1918 only the much-maligned socialist party had demanded that the country become a democracy," and then states that the party was more moderate in their policies in 1914 without supporting evidence etc..

Jill Hutchinson says

This is a very short book (213 page) on an immense topic....the Holocaust. which frightens people like no other event in history. The particular horror of it was the way the Nazis denied the worth of human life and their credo that Jews were vermin that needed exterminated from the earth. The author attempts, to dissect the reasons why the population of Germany could be capable of such boundless inhumanity. He posits that it was the perfect storm...a broken people after the humiliation of their loss in WWI which was never accepted in Germany, destructive ideas. and the bleakest of circumstances to produce history's most horrible catastrophe.

He explains how Hitler came to power and was seen as a savior after the fall of the Weimar Republic; the anti-Semitism that was already present in Germany; the fear of Communism which Hitler thought was controlled by Jews; the rising belief of eugenics which placed the Jews at the bottom of human kind; the cheapening of life brought on by the slaughter of the Great War, just to name a few.

He writes succinctly and his thesis is one of the best I have read about the "why" of the Holocaust. The subject is unpleasant but one that is necessary for all people to attempt to understand. Highly recommended.

Kit says

Great summary of the history and other background relevant to the Holocaust. Falls a bit short of its goal of being the first general work to explain the reasons. I don't buy the author's claim that there's a consensus among historians as to the reasons and the only need is a good general work on the topic. But this book is a great start in that direction and a great addition to the discussion. A quick read and well worth the time.

Jordan says

A fairly academic and fairly dry assessment of the social and economic factors behind the holocaust. The author claims that he is discussing points that previous authors have not in other books about the holocaust, but I found his arguments pretty run-of-the-mill. Still, not a bad book by any means. There was a lot of emphasis in explaining how the holocaust was unique compared to other genocides, which I found interesting.
