

I have read *Conjuring Hitler* and am convinced that this is an important, well documented, and seminal work of historical research. I am sure it will be around to be argued with when much of the academic product in the field has been forgotten and removed from the active shelves of university libraries.

What is particularly impressive is its amassing of citations for unusual facts and assessments, usually suppressed in mainstream narratives, from a number of different perspectives. Take for example the pages 228-55, of particular interest to me because of my past involvement with Poland. The sources cited range from a French first-hand observer, Ambassador André François-Poncet, to the former Stalinist spy, W.G. Krivitsky. Also cited are major works by historians usually considered as being right-wing (Carroll Quigley, David Irving), as well as another major work of history published by the left (Clement Leibovitz and Alvin Finkel).¹

In addition there is a surprising but in my view valuable digression into the occultist cultural background of Nazism (Ernst Jünger, Julien Hervier). The discussion of Jünger helps explain why liberal historiography, conducted according to the guidelines of Lord Acton, has not to this day been able to understand the cultural phenomenon of Nazism and its imitations.

Let me try to consider why this book has aroused controversy. One possible reason could be its tone, which is admittedly passionate to a degree not expected in an academic volume. I confess that this concerned me when I first opened the pages of *Conjuring History*, and read that “there is something far worse than Nazism, and that is the hubris of the Anglo-American fraternities, whose routine is to incite indigenous monsters to war” (p. xix). As a scholar committed to nonviolence, who had just completed a book on *The Road to 9/11*, I wondered if the indictment here was not excessive, in both content and affect. After having read Preparata’s book, I now find it impossible not to empathize with his anger.

Conjuring History has been criticized for citing the controversial author David Irving. But even Irving’s enemies give him grudging credit for his standard historical writings. And I believe that to write in this field, it is impossible to ignore what Irving has written.

¹ A personal disclaimer: twenty years ago I attempted, in vain, to find a publisher for the ambitious synoptic manuscript assembled by Clement Leibovitz. Until reading Preparata, I had been unaware that it had finally appeared as a book.

Carroll Quigley was once equally marginalized; but today, thanks partly to the Internet, his reputation for posterity is relatively secure.²

Objection might be made to the scant and dismissive treatment of mainstream historians in the same field of 20th-Century German history, such as Gerald Feldman. Prof. Feldman, a colleague of mine whom I know from a dissertation committee on which we both sat, is certainly (in the usual sense) a less controversial historian than Prof. Preparata. And yet more than one writer has made unpleasant allegations about Prof. Feldman's financial connections to the German insurance industry and the Goethe-Institut. I mention this, not to suggest that the allegations have any merit, but to point out that Prof. Preparata's dismissal of Feldman is strictly on the substance of what he wrote, and wholly devoid of the *ad hominem* nastiness raised by others.³

There are two other possible objections to the book that have some degree of legitimacy. The first and most surprising is the relative absence of archival sources (with some exotic exceptions). The second is the use of a number of popular works, by problematic authors such as Charles Higham and Eustace Mullins.⁴ On the second score, the problem is the same as with Irving. I know from my own experience that there are relevant facts in Higham and Mullins which it is virtually impossible to find elsewhere.

The last century saw unprecedented increases in official lying, off-the-books secret operations and negotiations, and falsified records. The result represents a serious challenge to the enlightenment hopes of the great liberal historian Lord Acton, that now "all information is within reach, and every problem...capable of solution."⁵ The public record of archival history – a chronological record of events, as reconstructed by archival historians from public records, now needs supplementation from other sources, and Prof. Preparata is to be commended for his efforts to do this.

² I hope that a quote from Quigley's *The Anglo-American Establishment* is not relevant: "No country that values its safety should allow what the Milner group accomplished-- that is, that a small number of men would be able to wield such power in administration and politics, should be able to exercise such influence over the avenues of information that create public opinion, and should be able to monopolize so completely the writing and the teaching of the history of their own period."

³ See for example Norman Finkelstein, "Professor Gerald Feldman - Another Holocaust huckster?" <http://www.normanfinkelstein.com/article.php?pg=3&ar=12>. The originator of this particular food fight was Prof. Feldman, not Prof. Finkelstein.

⁴ Mullins in particular has been accused of generating falsehoods for his anti-Semitic texts. John Kasper, one of his two original publishers for the cited work *Secrets of the Federal Reserve*, was eventually arrested for inciting a race riot in the South. And yet the book, which I have read, was one of the first published sources for the secret meetings of international bankers at Jekyll Island, Georgia, from 1907 to 1910, where the first draft of the Federal Reserve Act of 1913 was written.

⁵ Lord Acton, "Prospectus for Cambridge Modern History," in J. Rufus Fears, ed., *Selected Writings of Lord Acton* (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1988), Vol. 3, 678.

The book's great merit is to provide a brilliant synoptic overview of a bitterly contested era, contested not only at the time but in historiography ever since. It would be impossible for so original an effort to be beyond criticism. But it is authentic and important history. I think we can look forward to its growing importance through the years in the Social Science Citations Index, a crude but useful measure of significance. Can we predict the same for the works of the book's detractors?

Yours sincerely,

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