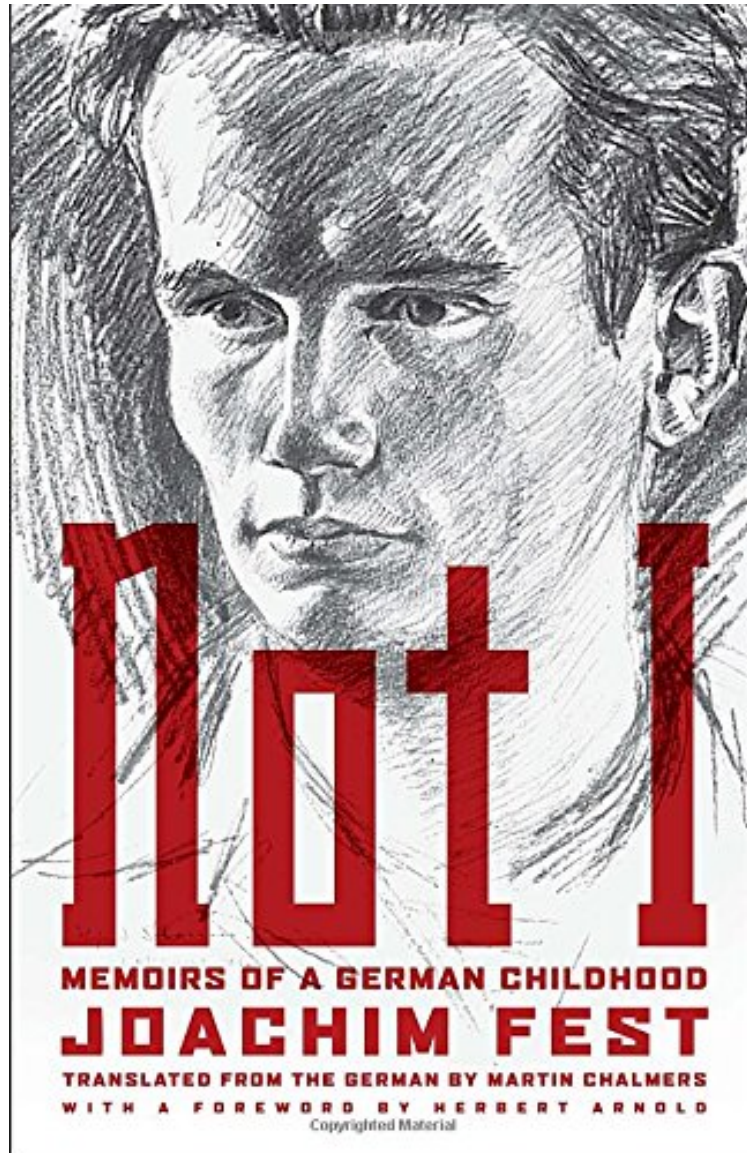


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Not I: Memoirs of a German Childhood

Joachim C. Fest

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Joachim C. Fest : Not I: Memoirs of a German Childhood before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Not I: Memoirs of a German Childhood:

17 of 18 people found the following review helpful. Important Memoir with ReservationsBy Eileen PollockI have a number of histories by Joachim Fest on my bookshelf, so it was with interest that I ordered Not I. Much of the book concentrates on the author's father's opposition to the Nazis and the effect upon the family. Fest Sr. is immediately dismissed from his position as headmaster of a school because of his anti-Nazi beliefs. The father was a devout

Catholic and I can assume his strong sense of rectitude, of realization of right and wrong, with its origin in religious morality, made him determined not to yield even when begged by his wife to do so for opportunistic reasons. For the Fests were now poor, and Joachim was forbidden by the Nazis to go to a private Catholic high school and had to attend what we would call a public high school. Their 70 year old grandfather went to work as employee in a bank to support the family. This was an educated, upper middle class family. The text is filled with references to Goethe, Schiller, Kant - the basis of the German Enlightenment. I found the many detailed accounts of family life a bit excessive. But then there is a passage that shows how Nazism impinged inexorably on the Fests. For example, they learned of the murders of Jews in Russia after the Russian invasion from soldiers returning from the Eastern Front. They had to be careful of everyone they spoke to, as Fest Sr. explained to the two older boys, 10 and 12, one of whom was Joachim. This is a fascinating account of a German childhood in the Third Reich and the treacherous ground upon which the family stood. The parents had Jewish friends, some of whom left suitcases of valuables with them which they buried in their backyard. Their friends, who believed this too would pass, never returned after the war. Although overcrowded with somewhat tedious incidents, like the escape that was not, it is nonetheless important for the character of the father and what life was like for an anti-Nazi Christian in Berlin during "interesting times". 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Ironically I love this book precisely for the reason most readers decried ...

By Cybercuchi Ironically I love this book precisely for the reason most readers decried it, in fact that's why I bought it! After reading some of the reviews, Fest account of his education, and how he and his brother Wolfgang were educated under the German Bildung tradition, almost in direct opposition in values to the current at the time coarse populist Nazi regime. This book is his posthumous shortly after he died wrote as a reaction to Gunther Grass, Fest criticized Grass, not so much for having joined, but for having concealed the fact for so many years while engaging in political criticism of others over their Nazi pasts. He said: "After 60 years, this confession comes a bit too late. I can't understand how someone who for decades set himself up as a moral authority, a rather smug one, could pull this off." Fest was born in the Karlshorst locality of Berlin, Germany, the son of Johannes Fest, a conservative Roman Catholic and staunch anti-Nazi schoolteacher who was dismissed from his post when the Nazis came to power in 1933. In 1936, when Fest turned ten, his family refused to make him join the Hitler Youth, a step which could have had serious repercussions for the family, although membership did not become compulsory until 1939. As it was, Fest was expelled from his school, and then went to a Catholic boarding school in Freiburg im Breisgau in Baden, where he was able to avoid Hitler Youth service until he was eighteen. In December 1944, when he turned 18, Fest decided to enlist in the Wehrmacht, mainly to avoid being conscripted into the Waffen SS. His father opposed even this concession, saying that "one does not volunteer for Hitler's criminal war." His father Johannes a bulwark of opposition against the infamous Nazi regime instill the values in to his family even at the cost of his career, derailed by the Nazis his family suffering many hardships, and personal lost because of it. The book if anything it's an example of character against the comfortable moral apathy, and turning a blind eye to the Nazi heavy handed totalitarianism, not only in persecuting the Jews, but in suppressing political freedom, and turning dissent in to a crime punishable by imprisonment, and even worse death, all this in exchange for material prosperity, an end to German humiliation, after the treaty of Versailles, and first the political gains Hitler did, and later his successful Blitzkrieg campaigns turned Hitler and the Nazis in to demigods, you just can imagine the unbearable pressure dissidents of the regime had to bear against the common opinion that the Nazis were on the right track. Just imagine ten years of your enemies proving you wrong, and you holding in to your ideas, and lifestyle who endanger your own survival, because you hold in to moral principles of decency, and Humanism, above the comforts of an easy life for you, and your family. Of course after ten years in 1943, after Stalingrad, and the Alamein, the many defeats after, the incessant bombing by the allies of German cities, the rationing cards, the telegrams of the lost of your sons at the front, and if that was not bad enough you personally dragged out of your home to serve in the Volkssturm even if you were 60 years old or 13 years old! Everybody in Germany could see the high price they paid to moral blindness, but by then it was not only more dangerous to oppose the regime, but even too late to do anything to avoid the catastrophe bearing down in to Germany. Ironically Fest turn to be not an scholar of the Italian Renaissance as originally was his inclination, but a Historian to the German debacle that War World II was, and that can be argued it was also dictated if not by Hitler, at least it was by Historical fate. Writing biographies of Hitler, and Albert Speer between other lesser known books. A little known fact outside Germany and not in the book it's the controversy named: Historikerstreit (Historians quarrel) when he criticized Jurgen Habermas for pointing as unique and singular the crimes of the Hitler's Holocaust vs the crimes committed by the communist Pol Pot, Stalin or Mao Zedong. My opinion a highly readable book if disappointing to those who do no appreciate literature, or expected a sort of thriller memories. 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Growing up in nazi Germany

By John L. Seymour Joachim Fest was about 6 when the nazis came to power. He writes a memoir of his family's experiences. His education in the classics was extraordinary, but standard for upper middle class germans of that era. His father was a teacher in a private gymnasium (high school) but strongly opposed the new power, and refused on principal to join the recommended nazi organization. His wife was mystified by his behavior but went along. He was eventually dismissed from his job and because of the reasons for dismissal was not allowed to apply for any other work. Joachim describes the shrinking of the house, patching of

clothes, shortage of food. He was eventually inducted into the army toward the end of the war, and eventually became a prisoner of war of the Americans. He describes trying to escape, and being recaptured. Due to his erudition he had a good relationship with the American officer who was his prison chief. The German people were in general strongly in favor of the Nazis, and by his description, turned blind eye to what was happening to the Jews. His brother died during the war, while in the military, due to the bad decision of an officer who thought he was malingering and ignored his illness. It is a very interesting book, particularly in the description of people's attitudes toward the Nazis, and overall ignoring of the disappearance of Jews from their neighborhoods. It is worth reading, even if you feel you know what there is to know about this time in history.

One of the New York Times Books Review's 100 Notable Books of 2014! A portrait of an intellectually rigorous German household opposed to the Nazis and how its members suffered for their political stance. Few writers have deepened our understanding of the Third Reich as much as German historian, biographer, journalist, and critic Joachim Fest. His biography of Adolf Hitler has reached millions of readers around the world. Born in 1926, Fest experienced firsthand the rise of the Nazis, the Second World War, and a catastrophically defeated Germany, thus becoming a vital witness to these difficult years. In this memoir of his childhood and youth, Fest offers a far-reaching view of how he experienced the war and National Socialism. True to the German *Bildung* tradition, Fest grows up immersed in the works of Goethe, Schiller, Mörike, Rilke, Kleist, Mozart, and Beethoven. His father, a conservative Catholic teacher, opposes the Nazi regime and as a result loses his job and status. Fest is forced to move to a boarding school in the countryside that he despises, and in his effort to come to terms with his father's strong political convictions, he embarks on a tireless quest for knowledge and moral integrity that will shape the rest of his life and writing career.

A New York Times Book Notable Book of 2014 "Quietly compelling, elegantly expressed... Not I shrinks the Wagnerian scale of German history in the 1930s and 1940s to chamber music dimensions. It is intensely personal, clear-eyed and absolutely riveting." —The New York Times "The socially conformist thing to do for a man of distinction—journalist, filmmaker, author of the best-selling first postwar German biography of Hitler, eventually co-editor of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*—would have been to recount the history of his own distinguished career. Instead Joachim Fest (1926-2006) chose to write *Not I*, a colorful and dramatic account of his childhood and youth in the nonconformist family that made him what he became." —The Wall Street Journal "Exceptional... it tells in a modest, believable, quietly bitter, and totally proud way of a family's extraordinary decency... Strong and unique. Without it, the English language these days is short a very good book." —New York Times (Global Edition) "Joachim Fest's fascinating memoir about what it was like to come of age during the years of the Third Reich is unusual because its central character is not the author but the author's remarkable father." —The New York Times Book "Fest's portraits of his brothers, his mother, and his cousins—and of himself as a teenage soldier and POW—are equally vivid and full of pathos." —Lorin Stein, *The Paris* "[An] extraordinary memoir, written in a polished style full of irony and wit." —New York of Books "A stunning portrait of a strenuously anti-Nazi family in Berlin who managed to hang on to their moral convictions during the brutalizing Hitler years... A beautifully written and translated work that creates rare, subtle portraits of Germans." —Kirkus (Starred) "[An] extraordinarily humane addition to our understanding of those who acted heroically not alone, but alongside a few intimates, together facing into the void." —America Magazine "A heroic interrogation of Germany's past." —Sunday Telegraph "I loved it, both as a story of great personal courage but also as a very moving witness to the fact that decent liberal values were not entirely lost during the Nazi period. It gives a fascinating and unusual slant on a time that has been so heavily worked over in more obvious ways. In its own manner, it stands alongside Victor Klemperer's extraordinary diaries of the same period." —Simon Mawer, best-selling author of *Trapeze* and *The Glass Room* "Fest's accounts of being called up, of trying to avoid military service, fighting, seeing comrades die, and being caught and kept as a prisoner of war are engrossing." —Independent On Sunday "[Fest] makes it hard to think about those blighted years, and it should be hard. His book is a glory, but only if you dare." —The Scotsman About the Author Joachim Fest was one of the most important authors and historians of the Federal Republic of Germany. From 1963 he worked as chief editor of *Norddeutscher Rundfunk* (North German Broadcasting), and from 1973 to 1993 as editor of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. His biography *Hitler* (1974) has been translated into more than twenty languages. His other works include *Inside Hitler's Bunker* (2005), *Speer: The Final Verdict* (2002), and *Plotting Hitler's Death* (1996). Herbert A. Arnold holds a PhD from the University of Würzburg and is a professor emeritus of German and Letters at Wesleyan University. Martin Chalmers's recent translations include *Summer Resort* by Esther Kinsky and *Brussels, the Gentle Monster: or the Disenfranchisement of Europe* by Hans Magnus Enzensberger. In 2004 he was awarded the Schlegel-Tieck Prize for *The Lesser Evil*, his translation of the post-1945 diaries of Victor Klemperer. Excerpt. © Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. In early 1936, from our place by the wall, Wolfgang and I eavesdropped on a rare argument between our parents. There had been a strangely irritable atmosphere all day. My mother evidently started it, reminding my father in a few short sentences what she had put up with, politically and personally, in the last three years. She said she

wasn't complaining, but she had never dreamt of such a future. From morning to night she was standing in front of pots, pans, and washboards, and when the day was over she had to attend to the torn clothes of the children, patched five times over. And then, after what seemed like a hesitant pause, she asked whether my father did not, after all, want to reconsider joining the Party. The gentlemen from the education authority had called twice in the course of the year to persuade him to give way; at the last visit they had even held out the prospect of rapid promotion. In any case, she couldn't cope anymore... And to indicate the end of her plea, after a long pause she added a simple "Please!" My father replied a little too wordily (as I sometimes thought in the years to come), but at the same time revealed how uneasy he had been about the question for a long time. He said something about the readjustments that she, like many others, had been forced to make. He spoke about habit, which after often difficult beginnings provides a certain degree of stability. He spoke about conscience and trust in God. Also that he himself, as well as my brothers and I, could gradually relieve her of some of the work in the household, and so on. But my mother insisted on an answer, suggesting that joining the Party would not change anything: "After all, we remain who we are!" It did not take long for my father to retort: "Precisely not! It would change everything!"