



The New Reich

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In 1991 the author broadcast an expose of German neo-Nazis and their associates. This is the story of the two years of research and filming which went into Wahrheit macht frei (the truth makes one free)-a phrase used by neo-Nazis today, a sick joke referring to the extermination camp motto, Arbeit macht frei.

There is a school of German journalism which portrays all Americans as forever lynching blacks, murdering Indians, and destroying the ecology. Michael Schmidt writes about Germany in the same vein: under the Sunday suits of the smiling diners in the countryside beer gardens are brown shirts; the police, the political parties, the most prestigious newspapers all exhibit neo-Nazi tendencies; German justice is blind in the right eye.

Perhaps Schmidt has simply spent too much time with the skinheads, petty hoodlums, opportunists, and ideologues who populate the extreme right wing, spewing out their half-truths, slogans, and total fabrications to advance their theories of racial purity, masculinity, and the redeeming quality of violence. However, he does a great service in describing the mental confusion, criminality, and general disfunctionality of these people. He correctly points out the danger represented by British "historian" David Irving and the American "Institute for Historical Review," and the reasons why neo-Nazi leaders deny the Holocaust in one breath and in the next say that it didn't go far enough.

Schmidt sees the international neo-Nazi conspiracy as very extensive indeed, and widely tolerated. The 1930's failure to take Hitler seriously and Reagan's 1985 Bitburg speech are signs that we are blind to the danger. Schmidt wants the movement stamped out now. And this popularly written account of his descent into the sewer of hate groups is his call for action.

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