Clarion Review

General

Gestapo 33
Clyde Doyal
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Two Stars (out of Five)

For over a century, espionage stories have fascinated readers with lead characters that embody the superhero myth, reassuring worried mortals that justice will prevail. Political intrigue, mistreatment of innocent people, and the threat of war, when based upon historical fact, effectively connect this genre of fiction to real life. These elements are all present in attorney Clyde Doyal's *Gestapo 33*, in which an American spy is sent to Germany during the rise of Nazi power.

The book begins in 1931 when the United States government enlists a German-born US citizen to impersonate German embassy attaché Konrad Becker. After months of intensive study of Becker and the political situation in Germany, the man begins his assignment to gather information about Adolph Hitler and his associates. Aligning himself with Hermann GÃ¶ring, the substitute Becker attains a prominent position in the newly formed Gestapo. Helped by a beautiful, competent, and flirty assistant, Sara Klein, and the capable Captain Schwartz, he encounters corruption, injustice, armed conflict, and personal doubt.

The Nazi party is consolidating strength, and its leaders are struggling to position themselves favorably under Hitler. Having secured GÃ¶ring's trust, Becker meets and promptly snubs Ernst RÃ¶hm, head of the Storm Troopers. Doyal writes, "He knew that Rohm had become an enemy of Goring and Himmler and was becoming less trusted by the *fuhrer* Â…Being an enemy of one whose days were numbered could be beneficial."

Although the real Becker is not Jewish, his substitute is. Plastic surgery has altered his facial features to give him the preferred Aryan look, but he finds ways to avoid tacit agreement with the Nazi goal of persecuting his people. When his superiors question his thoughts on the subject, he says, “he was a soldier and not a social scientist and therefore had no particular interest in the matter.”

The book offers few details of the buildings, customs, cuisine, and landscape of Pre-World War II Germany, which was rich with a classic European atmosphere. As Becker travels to Munich by train, “He watched the beautiful scenery flash by and listened to the clacking on the rails as the train picked up speed.” At a Munich hotel, Becker observes only, “The hotel was nice, and the décor was early Bavarian.”

The historically based plot holds promise, but fictional events fall into place with unrealistic precision. Clichés, typographical errors, and unclear transitions fail to inspire. Dialogue barely distinguishes one character from another. Use of present-day slang seems misplaced, as does the condescension towards women.

Many books have been written about this historical era. The author’s portrayal falls short of his subject matter’s potential, but it does give readers some insight into the ruthless infighting that took place during Nazi ascendancy.