

Jörg Becker

Review of the book

Willi Winkler: Der Schattenmann. Von Goebbels zu Carlos: Das mysteriöse Leben des François Genoud, Berlin: Rowohlt 2011.

The style of this book is very loose, flexible, easy to read and understand, but very often cynical. The informal tone brings the author very near to the style of the yellow press. Often his arguments seem logical and plausible, but when you read his text carefully, you notice that in many cases he argues associatively. The longer the book argues, the fuller it becomes with non-scholarly statements. The author asks himself what Genoud's thoughts could have been. He does not argue with facts but with vague and strange associations, and rests his conclusions on strange comparisons and suspicions. In other words: his book is full of speculation.

The protagonist of this book is Swiss Banker [François Genoud](#), who was a supporter of Nazis after 1945 (Eichmann, Barbie), of Arab terrorists, or of a terrorist like Ilich Ramírez Sánchez (Carlos).

The book falls more or less into two parts: In the first half, Winkler describes in detail how Genoud was able to get hold of the copyrights of important old Nazi figures like Bohrmann, Goebbels or Hitler through surviving relatives of those Nazi leaders. Finally, Genoud was able to make an enormous amount of money by publishing Goebbel's diaries, the copyright on which he partly owns.

The second part of the book, which mainly deals with the Near East, the Palestinian question, Carlos, Habbash, Haddad and the German Red Army Fraction, is bound together by only one single idea: Anti-Semitism. Winkler argues that anti-Semitism was the bridge between Genoud's Nazi enthusiasm and his support for Arab terrorists. Had the author used this bridge to characterize the strange figure of François Genoud only, such an odd perspective might be acceptable. Instead the author moves many more steps away from that bridge to very general observations and comments, such as: right-wing terrorism equals left-wing terrorism, and German Nazi Anti-Semitism is the same as Arab Anti-Semitism.

With such general conclusions Winkler moves away from serious historical and/or social scientific analysis. Nazi Anti-Semitism is completely different from Arab Anti-Semitism, the inhuman internal and external fascist imperialism of the Nazis cannot be reduced to Anti-Semitism, and the left-wing/right-wing terrorist equation is one that is highly controversial (to say the least) in social science theory.

Source: unpublished, December 2013.