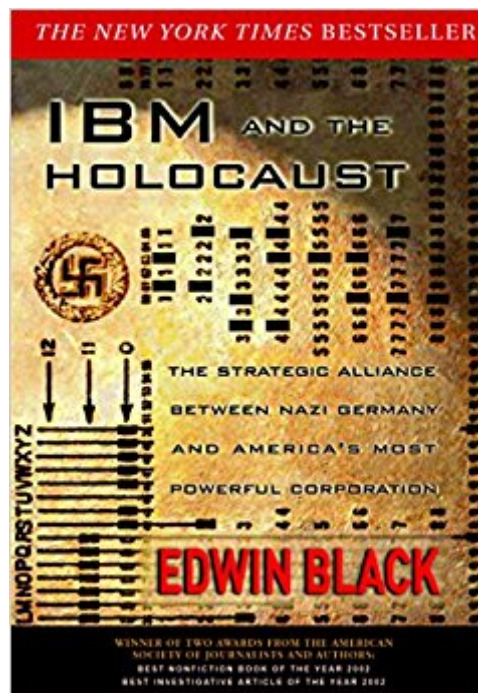




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IBM And The Holocaust: The Strategic Alliance Between Nazi Germany And America's Most Powerful Corporation



Synopsis

Published to extraordinary praise, this provocative international bestseller details the story of IBM's strategic alliance with Nazi Germany. *IBM and the Holocaust* provides a chilling investigation into corporate complicity, and the atrocities witnessed raise startling questions that throw IBM's wartime ethics into serious doubt. Edwin Black's monumental research exposes how IBM and its subsidiaries helped create enabling technologies for the Nazis, step-by-step, from the identification and cataloging programs of the 1930s to the selections of the 1940s.

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Customer Reviews

Was IBM, "The Solutions Company," partly responsible for the Final Solution? That's the question raised by Edwin Black's *IBM and the Holocaust*, the most controversial book on the subject since Daniel Jonah Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners*. Black, a son of Holocaust survivors, is less tendentiously simplistic than Goldhagen, but his thesis is no less provocative: he argues that IBM founder Thomas Watson deserved the Merit Cross (Germany's second-highest honor) awarded him by Hitler, his second-biggest customer on earth. "IBM, primarily through its German subsidiary, made Hitler's program of Jewish destruction a technologic mission the company pursued with chilling success," writes Black. "IBM had almost single-handedly brought modern warfare into the information age [and] virtually put the 'blitz' in the krieg." The crucial technology was a precursor to the computer, the IBM Hollerith punch card machine, which Black glimpsed on exhibit at the U.S. Holocaust Museum, inspiring his five-year, top-secret book project. The Hollerith was used to tabulate and alphabetize census data. Black says the Hollerith and its punch card data ("hole 3

signified homosexual ... hole 8 designated a Jew") was indispensable in rounding up prisoners, keeping the trains fully packed and on time, tallying the deaths, and organizing the entire war effort. Hitler's regime was fantastically, suicidally chaotic; could IBM have been the cause of its sole competence: mass-murdering civilians? Better scholars than I must sift through and appraise Black's mountainous evidence, but clearly the assessment is overdue. The moral argument turns on one question: How much did IBM New York know about IBM Germany's work, and when? Black documents a scary game of brinksmanship orchestrated by IBM chief Watson, who walked a fine line between enraging U.S. officials and infuriating Hitler. He shamefully delayed returning the Nazi medal until forced to--and when he did return it, the Nazis almost kicked IBM and its crucial machines out of Germany. (Hitler was prone to self-defeating decisions, as demonstrated in How Hitler Could Have Won World War II.) Black has created a must-read work of history. But it's also a fascinating business book examining the colliding influences of personality, morality, and cold strategic calculation. --Tim Appelo --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

The publisher has ordered a print run of 100,000 copies, indicating that they expect high demand for this contentious expose. The author asserts that a collusion existed between IBM Corporation and the government of the Third Reich, wherein IBM supplied the technology enabling Nazi authorities to systematize their persecution of European Jews. Expect much discussion in the press and on the street about this very controversial book. Brad HooperCopyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Very well researched, well written and thorough. Impeccable research, unbelievably thorough. The Hollerith machines described in this book are one of the greatest mysteries in Holocaust history--for some reason, this is the only place I've read about them, how the Germans used them and how IBM managed to continue to sell them to the Nazis with any detail. The scope of this book is amazing.

What an eye-opener! I recognized the equipment descriptions, although the punched-card equipment I was trained by IBM to use and design applications for as a systems engineer in the 1960s was not identical with what was described. It was close enough that I knew the author had done his research accurately. The IBM culture of tight control was also very accurate. My paternal grandparents were Jewish and came to the U.S. from Ukraine in the early 1900s. My maternal

great-grandparents were Jewish and came to the U.S. from Lithuania in the 1880s. My father was drafted into World War II and sent to serve in the South Pacific because the Army realized that, if he were captured in Europe, he would surely end up in a concentration camp and his fate would be better as a Japanese prisoner. He did survive to return home. So I had four different reasons to be mesmerized by this lengthy, occasionally repetitious, but diligent deep research into one aspect of why Hitler was so efficient at extermination.

This is another hard read from Edwin Black, but it is a very important topic. It is a troubling topic in so many ways. First and foremost, to know that corporations you grew up with aided the Nazi extermination of Jews, Jehovah's Witnesses, Gypsies, and others borders on the unfathomable. TO see such raw greed, with a complete lack of any moral fiber, is alarming. Thomas Watson was such a person. He was the president of IBM, and continued operations in Nazi Germany, throughout the war, using deceptive accounting and other ruses to hide this fact. The facts are, that the tabulating machines that IBM owned and sold and serviced, were used to do the census in Germany and subsequently in all the countries that became part of the Greater Reich, after they were overrun by the Nazis. The census was how they knew who and where the Jews were. They pinpointed them with ease, and then used these same machines, again owned and serviced by IBM, to efficiently move them to concentration camps or slave labor camps by trains organized and scheduled with utmost efficiency. Their acts were treasonous, as they were aiding the enemy! They were never charged, though they were investigated, because IBM was playing both sides, ingratiating themselves with the war efforts on this side of the Atlantic. They did not care where or how their money was made, or who from. They wanted more. I am ashamed of this "American" company. This story troubles me when thinking about how long governments and corporations have been gathering information about us. For over a century. The results can be devastating. I think of all the information the NSA has been collecting about us, and don't find it difficult to imagine that it would be used against us. When George Orwell wrote 1984, and talked about Big Brother, he was warning us about information technology run amok! It happened before, and it can happen again. This gives me a chill! This was an excellent read, my only criticism being the amount of material and detail which can be daunting. Nonetheless I believe it is a 5 star read.

As a consultant, I often hear complaints from others in the workforce about IBM's WebSphere product line, but the objects of these complaints pale in comparison to the history of IBM that Black presents in this work. While IBM is barely mentioned in McKenna's "The World's Newest Profession:

Management Consulting in the Twentieth Century" (see my review), Black presents the history of IBM from its beginnings through the second world war, with an intensive focus on IBM's connection with the National Socialists. In addition, during this journey the author brings the reader step-by-step through the historical events surrounding the second world war, with a concentration on Germany, a journey that is written so well that this book outshines many other books that cover this period of history in this aspect alone. Black explains that the visit with his parents in 1993 to the United States Holocaust Museum in Washington D.C. caused him to ask question after question, beginning with questions surrounding National Socialist obtainment of his parents' names (his parents are Jewish survivors of the Holocaust). The Holocaust Museum exhibit at the time had an IBM Hollerith D-11 card sorting machine (one of the predecessors of modern computing equipment), but the exhibit did not explain much more than provide indication that IBM had been responsible for organizing the census of 1933 that first identified Jews living in Germany. To discover the details behind this lack of explanation, Black assembled a host of researchers across the globe in search of documents that explain how IBM equipment was used by Germany during that time period, resulting in approximately 20,000 pages of such documentation, and based on this effort Black estimates in his introduction to this book that five times this amount in additional documentation is yet to be discovered. Thomas Watson, who eventually headed IBM, came from National Cash Register (NCR), a firm where Watson excelled for seventeen years, but where he felt business development opportunities were lacking. To broaden his opportunities at an international level, Watson joined the Computing-Tabulating-Recording Company (CTR), from where Hollerith machines originated, the name of which Watson changed to International Business Machines (IBM) after he became chief executive. Dehomag, a German firm, was a licensee of Hollerith equipment from IBM, but the monetary crisis in Germany during the early-1920s made it impossible for Dehomag to pay royalties and other monies it owed to IBM, which controlled all of Hollerith's patents, so Dehomag became a subsidiary of IBM. Black explains that while many European countries were slow to adopt Hollerith technology, more than half of IBM's overseas income came from Dehomag alone, and there were about seventy IBM subsidiaries and foreign branches worldwide at the time. In 1933, the business world questioned whether it was worth economic risk or moral descent trading with Germany. IBM was in an interesting position, because it exported American technology rather than import German goods, and while Dehomag was renamed IBM Germany following the second world war, it did not carry the name of IBM or Watson at the time, permitting it to fly below the radar. Unfortunately, in the pure pursuit of business development, Watson chose to risk moral descent, seeing many opportunities in the plans of the National Socialists, beginning with a census of Poland to identify

those of Jewish origin, and later working with German statisticians to trace Jewish bloodlines back to the early 1800s. The space available here is simply lacking for a thorough review of this book. In my opinion, the content that Black provides is as much an account of IBM and its enablement of ethnic cleansing as it is a warning to the modern world not to follow in the footsteps of early-IBM or the National Socialists. As other reviewers here have indicated, morality should not take a back seat to the demands of stockholders seeking a profit. And Black's mentions of Germany's "The Law for Simplification of the Health System" and "The Law for the Prevention of Genetically Sick Offspring" of 1934 together with the article for the German statistical journal written by Friedrich Zahn that same year, "The Economic Value of Man as an Object of Statistics", should be remembered by modern society as avenues which we should not travel again. But are we not as a global society moving in this direction again? Well recommended text to everyone seeking insight into how IBM, in the words of Black, put the "blitz" in "blitzkrieg".

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