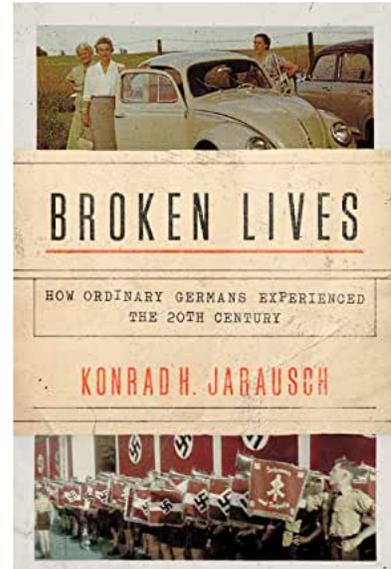


Broken Lives by Konrad H. Jarausch

September 28, 2018 [TheArk1 Home](#) [Book Reviews](#)

Konrad H. Jarausch has given us the fruit of his labors in his attempt to share how ordinary Germans experienced the 20th century in his book Broken Lives. It was described as “The gripping stories of ordinary Germans who lived through World War II, the Holocaust, and Cold War partition—but also recovery, reunification, and rehabilitation.” I went in search to see if he could help me deal with my sense that we are standing on the edge of a cliff these days in the choices we are either making or not making. My question is, how a culture could be drawn into a systemic series of death dealing choices? He used the diaries, documents and much more to weave a story of ordinary and extraordinary people reacting to the hardships and humiliations of WW1. He then composes an engrossing story of how men, women and children made sense of their experiences by quoting from those recovered texts.



On page 280“ I found this quote that seems to speak to my search and question: “Still in high school, Ursula Mahlendorf “shared with my classmates a fundamental distrust of all adults” who were responsible for the German catastrophe. In heated exchanges with her favorite teacher, “I accused his whole generation I articulated my age groups feeling of having been shortchanged by our elders and of being berated for what they had failed to teach us.” Similarly, theology student Erich Helmer voiced his cohort’s “search for answers to the questions: What can still be believed? What is solid after the ground of reality has and is continuing to cave in everywhere?” I sense our youth in their marches, voter registration drives and much more are demanding to be heard now. We too now have to choose wisely so not to repeat the 20th century mistakes that brought so much suffering.

I invite you to read this book. It could help you to reflect on things in a deeper way. It must have taken the author many years to discover all these documents let alone construct the story in such a way to share the humanity of those whose worlds he shares with us. But somehow he seems to perceive that we need these insights NOW.