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BRY SAC

RESISTING

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MILDRED HARNACK AND
THE RED ORCHESTRA

The Life
and Death
of an
American
Woman
in Nazi
Germany

MILDRED
HARNACK
AND
THE RED
ORCHESTRA

OXFORD

SHAREEN BLAIR BRY SAC

MILDRED HARNACK AND
THE RED ORCHESTRA

THIS GRIPPING AND HEARTBREAKING NARRATIVE IS THE FIRST FULL ACCOUNT OF AN AMERICAN WOMAN WHO GAVE HER LIFE in the struggle against the Nazi regime. As members of a key resistance group, Mildred and her husband, Arvid Harnack, assisted in the escape of German Jews and political dissidents, and for years provided vital economic and military intelligence to both Washington and Moscow. But in 1942, following a Soviet blunder, the Gestapo arrested, tortured, and tried some four score members of the Harnacks' group, which the Nazis dubbed the Red Orchestra.

Mildred Fish-Harnack was guillotined in Berlin on February 16, 1943, on the personal instruction of Adolf Hitler—the only American woman executed as an underground conspirator. Yet as World War II ended and the Cold War began, her courage, idealism, and self-sacrifice went largely unacknowledged in America and the democratic West, and were distorted and sanitized in the Communist East. Only now, with the opening of long-sealed archives, can the full story be told.

Resisting Hitler is based on extensive interviews with Fish-Harnack family, friends, and associates; it draws on personal correspondence and formerly classified German and Soviet KGB files and recently released CIA and FBI dossiers. It describes the life of a Wisconsin girl whose intelligence and beauty captivated a visiting scholar, Arvid Harnack, a member of a distinguished German academic family. It explores for the first time the complex familial connections of the Harnacks, Delbrücks, and Bonhoeffers, twelve of whom were executed for resistance acts. And

USA \$30.00

it details Mildred's friendship with Martha Dodd, daughter of FDR's ambassador to the Third Reich, whose affair with a Soviet diplomat led to his death.

Moments before her death, Mildred said, "I have loved Germany so much." In this superbly told life of an unjustly forgotten woman, Shareen Blair Brysac depicts the human side of a controversial resistance group that for too long has been portrayed as merely a Soviet espionage network. The extraordinary story of Mildred Fish-Harnack's ten dramatic years of resisting the Nazi regime also reminds today's readers of the hard moral choices that beset opponents of a ruthless totalitarian dictatorship.



Will Lambdin

SHAREEN BLAIR BRYSAC, a graduate of Barnard College, is the co-author with her husband, Karl E. Meyer, of the acclaimed *Tournament of Shadows: The Great Game and the Race for Empire in Central Asia*. A former producer for CBS News, she is the recipient of several Emmys and the Peabody Award. Currently, she is contributing editor of *Archaeology Magazine*.

JACKET DESIGN BY KATHLEEN M. LYNCH

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ADVANCE PRAISE FOR **RESISTING**

"Shareen Blair Brysac has written a scrupulously researched biography of the fascinating American-born Mildred Fish-Harnack, who with her German husband, paid the supreme penalty as a courageous participant in the anti-Nazi Resistance. Her gripping book illuminates an admirable segment of German society in a ghastly period of German history."

— Charles S. Maier, author of
The Unmasterable Past: History, Holocaust, and German National Identity and
Director, Minda de Gunzburg Center for European Studies, Harvard University

"Among the millions of Hitler's victims was a young woman from Wisconsin who married a German, joined the resistance, played an important role in the Soviet spy network known as the Red Orchestra, was caught and on Hitler's personal order was executed—by guillotine. So much was known about the faith and sacrifice of Mildred Fish-Harnack when the war ended; now, more than half a century later, Shareen Brysac with tireless research and a gift for vigorous narrative has brought this sad and inspiring story brilliantly to life. Secret operations have rarely been recorded with the passion and detail they receive in *Resisting Hitler*. No one who reads it will soon forget the courage of this woman who risked and lost her life to do the decent thing."

—Thomas Powers, author of
Heisenberg's War: The Secret History of the German Bomb
and *The Man Who Kept the Secrets: Richard Helms & the CIA*

"In telling Mildred Fish-Harnack's neglected life story, Shareen Brysac extends our knowledge of German anti-Nazi resistance, and of the landscape of Nazism in general. She also illuminates a great deal of German and American intellectual and cultural history. This is an extraordinarily valuable study."

—Robert Jay Lifton, M.D.,
author of *The Genocidal Mentality: Nazi Holocaust and Nuclear Threat*
and *The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide*

"The twists and turns of wartime politics and espionage provide a gripping background for the tragic life of this doomed American woman in Nazi Germany. It is a fine contribution to contemporary history and biography."

—Deirdre Bair, author of
Simone de Beauvoir: A Biography and *Anais Nin: A Biography*



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