

Intellectuals Didn't Oppose Nazism Because It Was 'Tedious'

There are times when men shirk from opposing grievous error because it's dangerous, or inconvenient, or they are temporarily blinded by it.

And sometimes, it's because it's so damn boring.

This lesson was forcefully brought home to me in an article Carl Trueman wrote for *First Things* last year entitled ["Persistent Defiance."](#) In it, he points to the example of Dietrich von Hildebrand (1889-1977), a Catholic philosopher who was one of the few German intellectuals to openly oppose the Nazi regime during its rise.

Why were there so few opponents to a manifestly evil regime? Trueman writes:

"Von Hildebrand offered an interesting insight into why opposition to Nazism was so hard. It was not because it was risky, though that was undoubtedly true. It was because it was tedious. To stand in opposition to something takes time and energy and yields little or no results and rarely brings immediate social credit (in fact, it typically brings the opposite). Sooner or later most people become tired of being indignant and simply accommodate themselves to what appears to be an invincible force. They may not privately approve but they publicly acquiesce."

Error is dull. It's especially dull when it is communicated through a steady campaign of propaganda, as it was by the Nazis. Propaganda does not aim at engaging the intellect or fostering dialogue; to be effective, it repeats simplistic messages with great frequency. As such, great minds often lose interest in actively opposing the errors promoted by it.

But, as the horrors of Nazism show us, there are devastating

consequences to such negligence. They are to be commended who continue the fight against error, however boring that fight may get.