

**Reviewed by Lisa Vasil,
New Zealand Writers Enzine,
April 2008**

Uncommon Enemy is John Reynolds' first published fiction book. Set in 1940s New Zealand, Germany has just won World War Two - based on the premise that if the Germans had developed the atom bomb before anybody else the Allies would have had no choice but to surrender. A pretty convincing argument in my opinion - it's a plausible "what if" to base the story around.

The plot follows a group of young people and how their lives radically change in the months following the surrender, in a Nazi-occupied New Zealand. Stuart, our young hero, is a university student, totally smitten with Carol, a pretty young receptionist he meets on the Devonport ferry. Carol is reluctantly engaged to the dastardly Hamish, a nasty piece of work. While Hamish becomes a collaborator to the new Nazi regime, Stuart learns of the brutal restrictions now being imposed on life and teachings at the university. As more civil liberties are stripped away, Stuart, Carol and friends find themselves embroiled in the growing underground resistance movement, leading to an inevitable confrontation with the authorities, and ultimately with Hamish.

The plot is fairly fast-paced and doesn't drag; there is enough action and drama to hold the reader's attention. John Reynolds has clearly done his research - he portrays well the upheaval and betrayal of occupation, as friends turn on friends, collaborators against resistance fighters. The settings and descriptions are very New Zealand, and having the headquarters of the resistance movement hidden under the floorboards of a woolshed was an authentic touch.

While many threads are satisfactorily tidied up the main question is left hanging - will New Zealand ever emerge from German occupation? It's a slightly frustrating ending, but then again, perhaps Mr Reynolds is leaving enough room in our imagination for a sequel.