

# INVESTIGATE

Investigate Review  
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John Reynolds' first novel belongs to a genre that continues to fascinate – what would happen if German had won World War Two? Dozens of examples of the genre have been published. Prominent titles include *The Sound of His Horn* by Sarban, *The Man in the High Castle* by Philip K. Dick and *Fatherland* by Robert Harris. The sound of his Horn and *Fatherland* were both set in Europe and Philip Dick's book set in America. Daringly Reynolds places his Nazis in New Zealand.

*Uncommon Enemy* is an intriguing alternative to the more expected Japanese takeover which is prominently featured in an essay in the recent anthology of speculative alternative history *New Zealand As It Might Have Been* edited by Stephen Levine – “What if Japan had Invaded New Zealand?” Curiously, many more novels have been written about Germany winning than Japan emerging victorious.

Though not formally part of this particular strand of alternative future fiction, C.K. Stead's *Smith's Dream* comes to mind as another exploration of a neo-fascist takeover of the New Zealand government.

In Reynolds' well-detailed period piece, Auckland and nearby environs are the centres for much of the action. In particular, Auckland's North Shore – a more than familiar literary landscape as a consequence of Devonport/Takapuna being New Zealand's largest literary colony so to speak – is the backdrop of much of the vigorous in-fighting that features in this book.

The hero of *Uncommon Enemy* is an idealistic high-spirited young man called Stuart Johnson, and from early on in the novel he is locked in combat with the odious and bullying Hamish Beavis. Initially they are rivals for the affections of Carol Peterson, and later, perhaps a little predictably, given Beavis's aggressive nature, they found themselves as ideological protagonists. Stuart joins the resistance and Hamish joins the Nazis.

Wartime Premier Peter Fraser has a cameo role as a leader who pays the price for refusing to make a Nazi salute by being assaulted by Von Ribbentrop's henchmen. Reynolds describes an effective Germanisation of England and New Zealand – fascist Oswald Mosley is made Prime Minister of England, Winston Churchill's home becomes Gestapo headquarters and the Duke of Windsor is reinstated as King Edward VIII; in New Zealand, the Northern Club is occupied and the Academic Values Authority quashes academic freedom at Auckland University College with the decrees of the New Order.

A secondary thread in the plot which adds to the mounting drama of the story is the presence of a couple of White Rose members one of whom does not turn out quite as she seems to be. (The White Rose was a student resistance group against the Nazis in wartime Germany.) The novel reaches an exciting climax which leaves a lingering strand of hope for the future of the resistance movement. Reynolds' novel should be enjoyed not only by those old enough to remember New Zealand's wartime years but also by younger generations interested in the dark possibility of Nazi rule.