

# JENNIFER CHIAVERINI RESISTANCE WOMEN

## Reading Group Discussion Questions

1. Had you heard of Mildred Fish Harnack or the Red Orchestra before reading *Resistance Women*? What role do novels have in our understanding of history? Did *Resistance Women* change your perception of World War II or Nazi Germany?
2. From Mildred and Greta's humble beginnings to Sarah and Martha's more privileged upbringing, *Resistance Women* tells the story of women from very different backgrounds. Discuss how their unique personalities contributed to the resistance fight. Which woman's story resonated with you the most?
3. In response to Mildred saying that she is no longer surprised by the fighting between the Communist Reds and the Nazi Browns, Arvid responds, "Darling, you must never become accustomed to the extraordinary and outrageous. If you do, little by little, you'll learn to accept anything." Do you agree? In what ways does Mildred take his advice to heart? What examples of this accepting of the outrageous have you seen in your own life?
4. *Kinder, Küche, Kirche* (children, kitchen, church)—the traditional vision of women as purely domestic—is mentioned more than once by Mildred and her comrades. The slogan actually dates from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but reappeared in Hitler's Germany. Why do you think the Nazis chose to glorify home-making and childbearing in their vision of the Reich? How did that idealized vision of housewives contrast with what women were actually doing in Germany during the war years?
5. When forced to decide whether to help translate Hitler's manifesto into English, Greta ultimately decides to work on the translation. Was that right decision? What was her motivation for doing the work?
6. Despite having a young child, Greta and Adam still chose to take part in the Red Orchestra. Would you have done the same?
7. What did you make of Sarah's relationship with Dieter? What do you think her life would have been like had she chose to stay with him and get married?
8. Mildred goes home to the U.S. at one point, but chooses to return to Germany, to Arvid and the work of resistance. Was that a foolish decision? A brave one? What would you have done?
9. "Perhaps Germany will serve as a warning," said Arvid. "May they learn from us to snuff out fascism in America when the first sparks arise and not delay until democracy goes up in flames all around them." Has America learned that lesson? What factors might cause fascism to rise in America as it did in Nazi Germany? How would Americans combat it?