



Behind Enemy Lines: The True Story of a French Jewish Spy in Nazi Germany

By Marthe Cohn, Wendy Holden

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Behind Enemy Lines: The True Story of a French Jewish Spy in Nazi Germany By Marthe Cohn, Wendy Holden

Marthe Cohn was a beautiful young Jewish woman living just across the German border in France when Hitler rose to power. Her family sheltered Jews fleeing the Nazis, including Jewish children sent away by their terrified parents. But soon her homeland was also under Nazi rule. As the Nazi occupation escalated, Marthe's sister was arrested and sent to Auschwitz. The rest of her family was forced to flee to the south of France. Always a fighter, Marthe joined the French Army.

As a member of the intelligence service of the French First Army, Marthe fought valiantly to retrieve needed inside information about Nazi troop movements by slipping behind enemy lines, utilizing her perfect German accent and blond hair to pose as a young German nurse who was desperately trying to obtain word of a fictional fiancé. By traveling throughout the countryside and approaching troops sympathetic to her plight, risking death every time she did so, she learned where they were going next and was able to alert Allied commanders.

When, at the age of eighty, Marthe Cohn was awarded France's highest military honor, the Médaille Militaire, not even her children knew to what extent this modest woman had faced death daily while helping defeat the Nazi empire. At its heart, this remarkable memoir is the tale of an ordinary human being who, under extraordinary circumstances, became the hero her country needed her to be.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

This compelling memoir is testament to how extraordinary circumstances can transform a life—and how an extraordinary person reacts to difficult circumstances. Cohn was a typical French-Jewish teenager when WWII broke out, but as it did for millions of others, the war transformed her life in unimaginable ways. "There was no time to be frightened," she and Holden, a veteran journalist, write. The first part of the book chronicles her family and friends' response to the war. That countless other books have described the effects of the Nazi onslaught—the life-and-death consequences of the unthinkable decisions many were forced to make—makes her descriptions no less powerful and tragic. The narrative turns into a quasi thriller in its second half, depicting how the death of Cohn's fiance led her, now a nurse, to join the Free French forces in the fight to defeat the Nazis. A blonde, fluent German speaker who never mentioned to her superiors that she was a Jew, she went on several life-threatening missions into German territory, earning France's highest military honors. But she describes her actions without self-aggrandizement. What comes through is the importance of courageous individual action in the most dire situations. This is the amazing story of a woman who lived through one of the worst times in human history, losing family members to the Nazis but surviving with her spirit and integrity intact—Cohn now lives in California. 8 pages of b&w photos.

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From [Booklist](#)

The courageous Marthe Hoffnung was born in 1920 in the city of Metz, 33 miles from the Franco-German border. Born into a close-knit Jewish family, Marthe and her six brothers and sisters basked in the glow of love, education, and freedom of expression, but darker times altered their lives forever when Hitler's machinations reached the perimeters of France to shatter their lives. Marthe's family played an active role in the Resistance movement, often hiding fellow Jews in their home or ensuring their passage to an escape route. This selflessness would manifest itself further when Marthe joined the French army and, with her perfect German accent and blond hair, made several trips into occupied Germany posing as a German nurse looking for her fiance in order to obtain critical intelligence information. In 1990, at the age of 80, Marthe was awarded the *Medaille Militaire*, France's highest honor. Despite having played a tremendous role in securing vital strategic information crucial to ending World War II, Cohn relays her amazing story of unprecedented bravery with simplicity and modesty. *Elsa Gaztambide*

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Review

"This compelling memoir is a testament to how extraordinary circumstances can transform a life—and how an extraordinary person reacts to difficult circumstances. What comes through is the importance of courageous individual action in the most dire situations. This is the amazing story of a woman who lived through one of the worst times in human history, losing family members to the Nazis but surviving with her spirit and integrity intact." —*Publishers Weekly*

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