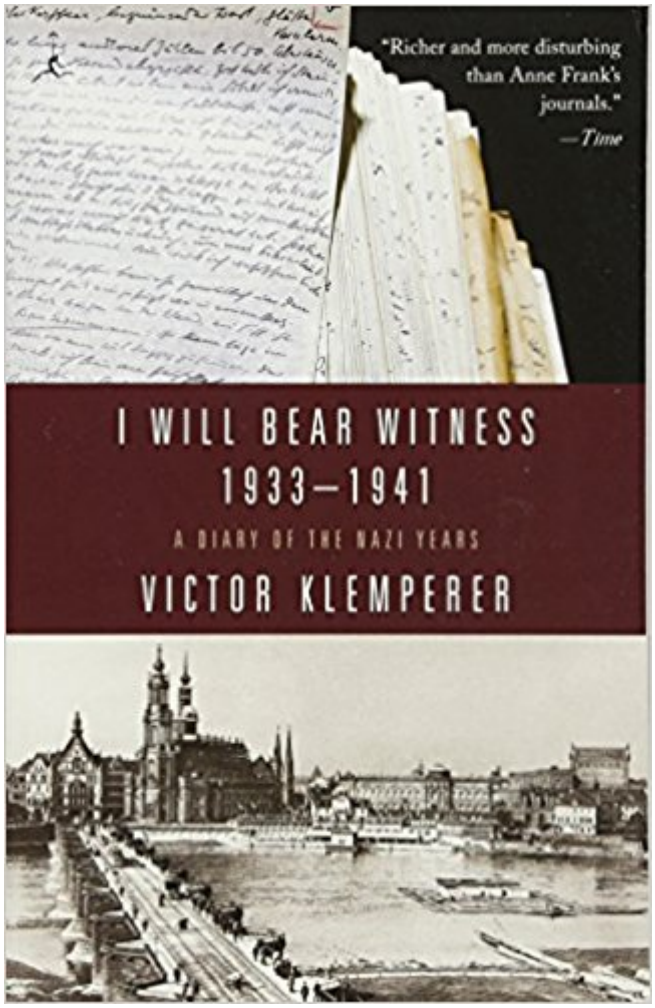
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I Will Bear Witness: A Diary Of The Nazi Years, 1933-1941



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Synopsis

The publication of Victor Klemperer’s secret diaries brings to light one of the most extraordinary documents of the Nazi period. "In its cool, lucid style and power of observation," said The New York Times, "it is the bestÃ Â Ã Â written, most evocative, most observant record of daily life in the Third Reich." I Will Bear Witness is a work of literature as well as a revelation of the day-by-day horror of the Nazi years.
Ã Â Ã ÂÃ ÂÃ ÂÃ ÂÃ Â A Dresden Jew, a veteran of World War I, a man of letters and historian of great sophistication, Klemperer recognized the danger of Hitler as early as 1933. His diaries, written in secrecy, provide a vivid account of everyday life in Hitler’s Germany.Ã Â What makes this book so remarkable, aside from its literary distinction, is Klemperer’s preoccupation with the thoughts and actions of ordinary Germans: Berger the greengrocer, who was given Klemperer’s house ("anti-Hitlerist, but of course pleased at the good exchange"), the fishmonger, the baker, the much-visited dentist. All offer their thoughts and theories on the progress of the war: Will England hold out? Who listens to Goebbels? How much longer will it last?Ã Â This symphony of voices is ordered by the brilliant, grumbling Klemperer, struggling to complete his work on eighteenth-century France while documenting the ever- tightening Nazi grip. He loses first his professorship and then his car, his phone, his house, even his typewriter, and is forced to move into a Jews’ House (the last step before the camps), put his cat to death (Jews may not own pets), and suffer countless other indignities.
Ã Â Despite the danger his diaries would pose if discovered, Klemperer sees it as his duty to record events. "I continue to write," he notes in 1941 after a terrifying run-in with the police. "This is my heroics. I want to bear witness, precise witness, until the very end."Ã ÂÃ Â When a neighbor remarks that, in his isolation, Klemperer will not be able to cover the main events of the war, he writes: "It’s not the big things that are important, but the everyday life ofÃ ÂÃ Â tyranny, which may be forgotten. A thousand mosquito bites are worse than a blow on the head. I observe, I note, the mosquito bites."Ã Â This book covers the years from 1933 to 1941. Volume Two, from

1941Ã Â Ã Â to 1945, will be published in 1999.

Book Information

Paperback: 544 pages

Publisher: Modern Library; New edition edition (November 15, 1999)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0375753788

ISBN-13: 978-0375753787

Product Dimensions: 5.3 x 1.1 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 12.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars 89 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #75,843 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #31 inÃ Â Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > Europe > France #58 inÃ Â Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Ethnic & National > Jewish #62 inÃ Â Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > Europe > Germany

Customer Reviews

"One of the great testimonies of our century. . . . Klemperer's ability to grasp moods and attitudes has a truly Dickensian quality."Ã Â Ã Â --Los Angeles Times"What has been called one of the most remarkable documents to come out of the Second World War turns out to be one of the most compulsively readable books of the year."Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â --The San Diego Union Tribune"For the next generation of historians, Klemperer's diaries will be required reading."Ã Â Ã Â --Gordon Craig, The New York Review of Books"To read his almost day-by-day account is a hypnotic experience; the whole, hard to put down, is a true murder mystery--from the perspective of the victim."--Peter Gay, The New York Times Book Review

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These two volumes comprise a remarkable book, both as a historical document and as a compelling, humane account of the experience of living in Germany during the Nazi years. Klemperer has indeed "witnessed," not only by providing a telling, bottom-up history of the period and place, but particularly by showing how individuals of all kinds struggle with accommodation, resistance and simple survival under a murderous, totalitarian regime.There are numerous, detailed reviews of the particulars, so I won't add to them, beyond saying: If you want to better understand the history of the period, and also approach an appreciation of human coping in such circumstances, I have not read a more compelling account and highly recommend Klemperer's diaries.

Excellent reading, Victor Klemperer's book, I Will Bear Witness. Rates up there with Anne Frank's diary. It is an amazement to read his thoughts and daily trials whilst we, the readers, know the outcome... but at the time Mr. Klemperer was submitting his daily life to his diary, he did not know how his life and Germany were going to end. As each law passed he had his home taken from him, his car, his clothes became ragged without recourse to replacing them. Food rations were constantly lowered and taxes levied. A very touching and interesting read.

This is a day-to-day account of the horrors of living as a Jew in Nazi Germany--the daily insults in the press, on the streets, through the laws that daily require more restrictions, more penalties, more taxes, more debasement. This is only the first part of the enormous record Klemperer kept, and it ends, dramatically, right after America has entered the war. While the other Jews in the "Jews' House" in which Klemperer and his wife have been forced to live express dismay at this new development, fearing it will only drag out the war to Hitler's benefit, he writes that it might be a very good thing. "Adding weight to the clock makes it wind down faster."Everyone should read this absorbing, harrowing, sometimes nit-picky and on rare occasions petty (after all Klemperer is eminently human) but always astonishing account.

This is an extraordinary first-person account of daily life in the Third Reich from the years 1933-1941. Written by Victor Klemperer, a Jewish convert who lived through the entire Hitler period in Germany and whose life was apparently spared because his wife was "Aryan," the diary reveals the petty inconveniences, the fear, and the constant humiliations that were the everyday experiences of the author and his wife. The diary is a portrait of Nazi Germany written from the inside out, and in that sense is unlike any book I have ever read on this subject.

Here is a book that every person on the planet should read! I have read tons of history about the Nazi takeover of Germany, but it is always presented on the basis of, ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“on X date, Hitler did A and then on Y date, he did B.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• I have always thought that I had a pretty good feel for the events leading up to WWII and their timing. However, as the actual diary of a German Jew, "I Will Bear Witness: 1933-1941," the dates acquire an immediacy and reality that I have never experienced before. The real shock was how fast the Nazis were able to move as soon as Hitler managed to obtain the Chancellorship! I had always had the sense of something of a linear progression of oppression from Hitler coming to power to the end of the war. It has been something of a shock to have my nose rubbed in the reality of how fast the Nazis got out of the gate, so to speak!Hitler became Chancellor on 30 January 1933. By 7 April Victor Klemperer was motivated to write, ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“The pressure I am under is greater than in the war, and for the first time in my life I feel political hatred for a group (as I did not during the war), a deadly hatred. In the war I was subject to military law, but subject to law nevertheless; now I am at the mercy of an arbitrary power.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â•On the 25th of April Victor comments, ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“The Prussian Minister of Education has ordered that school pupils who have had to repeat a year should, where possible, if they are members of the Hitler movement, move up after all.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â•By the 15th

of May Victor writes, ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“The garden of a Communist in Heidenau is dug up, there is supposed to be a machine-gun in it. He denies it, nothing is found; to squeeze a confession out of him, he is beaten to death. The corpse brought to the hospital. Boot marks on the stomach, fist-sized holes in the back, cotton wool stuffed into them. Official post mortem result: Cause of death dysentery, which frequently causes premature ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“death spots.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â•Before this, I didnÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t realize at a gut level that things got this crazy before Hindenburg died in 1934! "Mein Kampf" is a blueprint for tyranny and this book is an eyewitness to that tyrannyÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â •in a civilized Western nation no less!

Great bit of history. I read a few pages at a time, highlighting the transition to coercive socialism. Lessons we should never forget, but will probably have to learn all over again.

Klemperer, a Jewish professor in Dresden, during Hitler's rule gives an excellent view of daily life in Nazi Germany. Klemperer puts a face on abuse and discrimination and puts a very real face on persecution.Klemperer's work is a quality historical tool written with real anger for sure but without agenda.So much of that period still haunts the world. We have mythologized history, censored and revised.In the process, we have certified a version that has been legally approved and research has been criminalized.Klemperer only saw what one person could see and wrote of what was in front of him. He is not an "end all," not an apology, not an explanation, but a place, perhaps, to begin.

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